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CHRISTIAN COURIER

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Alexander Solzhenitsyn:
A prophet to the world ... p. 5

The Art of the Scrounge ... p. 10

62nd year of publication

A tale of two nominating conventions

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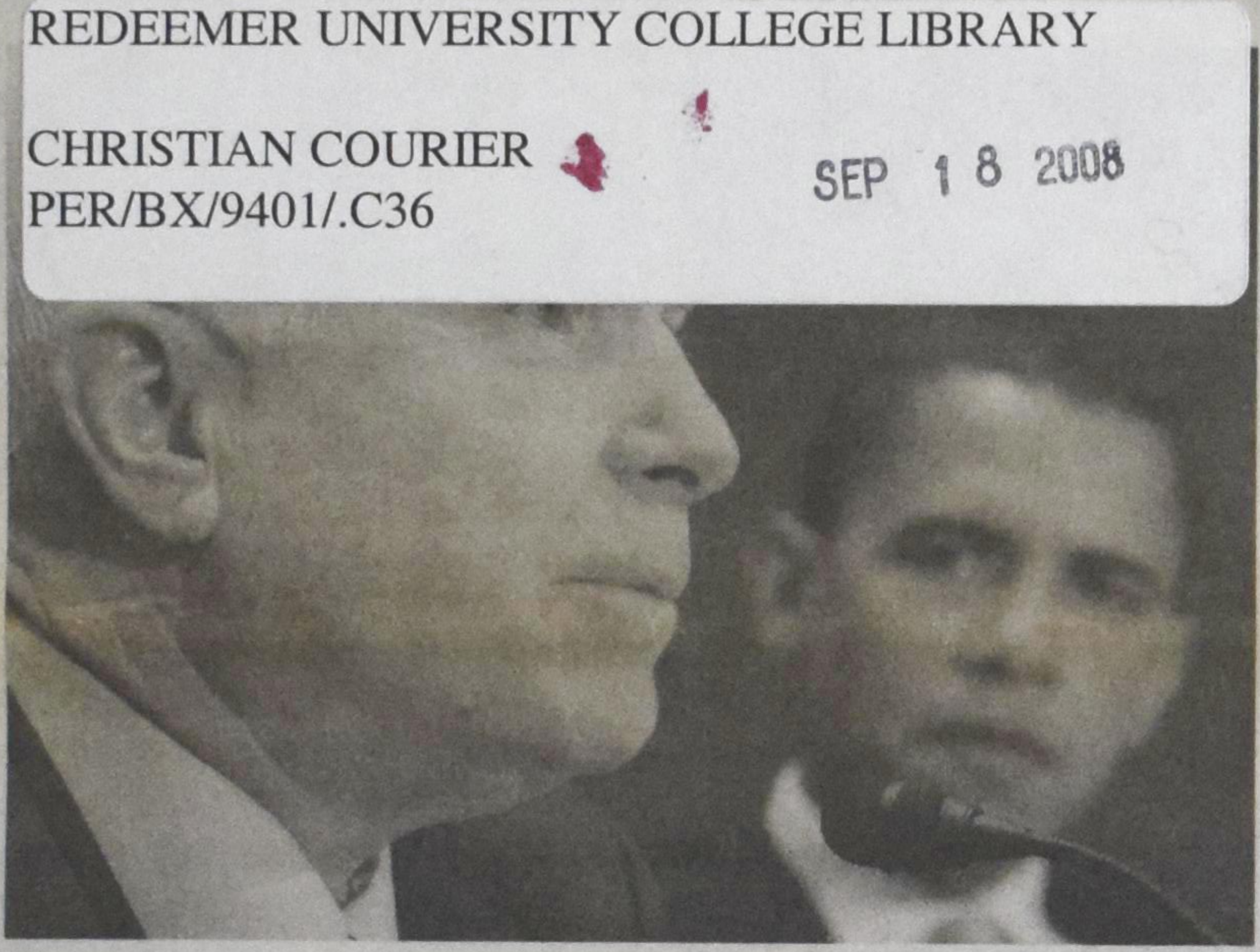

Bert Witvoet

American political conventions are strangely unreal events. Participants swallow with utter sincerity and enthusiasm the most self-aggrandizing statements, the most superlative claims to patriotism, and the smarmiest references to motherhood and family. The Democratic and Republican conventions this summer were no exceptions. It seems that the best qualifications for becoming the next president or vice-president of the United States are to be born in a shack, to have the best hard-working parents the world has ever known, to have fought in a war or have sons in the army, and to hate Washington Capitol and its self-serving bureaucrats.

Compared to American politics, Canadian politics is a pretty tame affair. Robin Williams once described Canada as follows: It's like a loft apartment over a really great party. Like: "Keep it down, eh?" How can Canadians possibly get excited over an election that features the likes of Steven Harper, Stephane Dion and Jack Layton? None of them are war heroes, none of them had particularly humble beginnings, and none of them have a pregnant unmarried daughter. Somehow we Canadians have to muddle through with electrifying issues like "Did we need an election?" "Whose fault is it that a dozen or more people died of contaminated meat?" "Who is the most responsible for global warming – the Liberals or the Conservatives?"

Different approaches

There is more to American politics than the hyperboles that flow at the nominating conventions, of course. Apart from the fact that both sides are strong on patriotism, better education, a stronger economy and family values, whatever they happen to be, Democrats and Republicans stake out different territories on quite a few issues.

The Democrats favour a quick end to what they consider the wrong war in Iraq; the Republicans are willing to tough it out until victory is guaranteed in a necessary war. The Democrats want a better public educational system; the Republicans, always giving the nod to competition, want more parental choice between public, private and charter schools. The Democrats talk about the rights of unions; the Republicans warn against too much power on the part of unions. The Democrats tend to be pro-choice; the Republicans, pro-life. They each have a different brand of feminism, which becomes obvious when one compares a left-wing Hillary Clinton to a right-wing Sarah Palin.

Democrats believe in the gospel of Al Gore; Republicans think that the best way to fight climate change is to ground Gore's private jet. Barak said that drilling for oil is a stop-gap measure; the mood at the nominating convention in St. Paul, Minnesota, was "Drill, baby, drill." Democrats favour gun control; Republicans live by the motto that guns don't kill people; people do.

Both sides favour energy independence and less reliance on foreign oil. Both want jobs to stay in America and not disappear to foreign shores. Both sides want change in the way Washington has handled the fortunes of the good ship "America," although it is difficult to pretend that the Republicans had nothing to do with the way the ship was steered the last eight years. Both sides believe that America is the land of unlimited possibilities and that loyalty to country comes first.

Wrong kind of feminism?

One of the most exciting parts of this race toward the White House consist of studying the four personalities that have emerged at both conventions: In Lane One: Inexperienced Senator Barak Obama and Experienced Senator Joe Biden; in Lane Two: Experienced Senator John McCain and Inexperienced Governor Sarah Palin! Perhaps it would be accurate to say that Sarah Palin proves to be the most inspiring counterpart to Barak Obama. (Sarah Palin's speech drew a television audience of 37.2 million people, compared to 38.4 million for Barak Obama.)

How did Cindy McCain refer to Sarah again? "John has picked a reform-minded ... hockey-mommin' ... basketball shootin' ... moose huntin' ... fly-fishin' ... pistol-packing ... mother of five for vice president." And if that is not enough to scare the Democrats, Palin contributed her own description of herself: "The only difference between a hockey mom like herself and a pitbull

See **Conventions** *cont. on p. 2*

Canadians go to the polls before the U.S. election

Bert Witvoet

Canadians hear loud speculation, especially on the part of the opposition parties, that the Tories want an early election because they fear the outcome of four scheduled by-elections, which will probably not benefit the Conservatives, and because they fear an Obama win in the United States. If Barak Obama takes the presidency, Canadians, who generally favour Obama, might want to follow suit and elect a left-wing government, too.

The speculation may well correspond to reality. Most political parties are strongly focused on their own survival. Steven Harper is, if anything, a shrewd strategist. It's not accidental that his minority government has outlasted most minority governments in Canadian history. Thus, when Canadians go to the polls on October 14, they may well ask themselves, "What's the point?" Even Prime Minister Harper does not expect a majority government outcome for his party.

What a second minority government for the Tories will bring, however, is a new lease on life. It will also put pressure on the opposition to make this 40th parliament work for at least another two years. It's no secret that the Tories have no friends in Parliament, and, for that reason, committee work is difficult when you are constantly outvoted by a majority that is not in power.

Achievements

Minority governments can produce results, however. Consider a thumbnail sketch provided by Don Martin of the *National Post*:

"Taxes have been reduced across the board, the GST cut by 2 percent for shoppers, income splitting granted to seniors and a new tax-free savings plan created for everyone. Those who earn a living using tools or the parents of sports-minded children get special tax breaks for their equipment.

"Criminals who buy, sell or use guns for violent crime will be hit with tougher mandatory prison sentences. A new age of sexual consent is in place so fathers like

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News

Conventions *continued from p.1*

is lipstick." Too bad Michelle Obama is not running against Sarah Palin. That match-up would provide a stark contrast alright, but both women would appeal to the common folk who like down-to-earth and strong women with a lot of common sense.

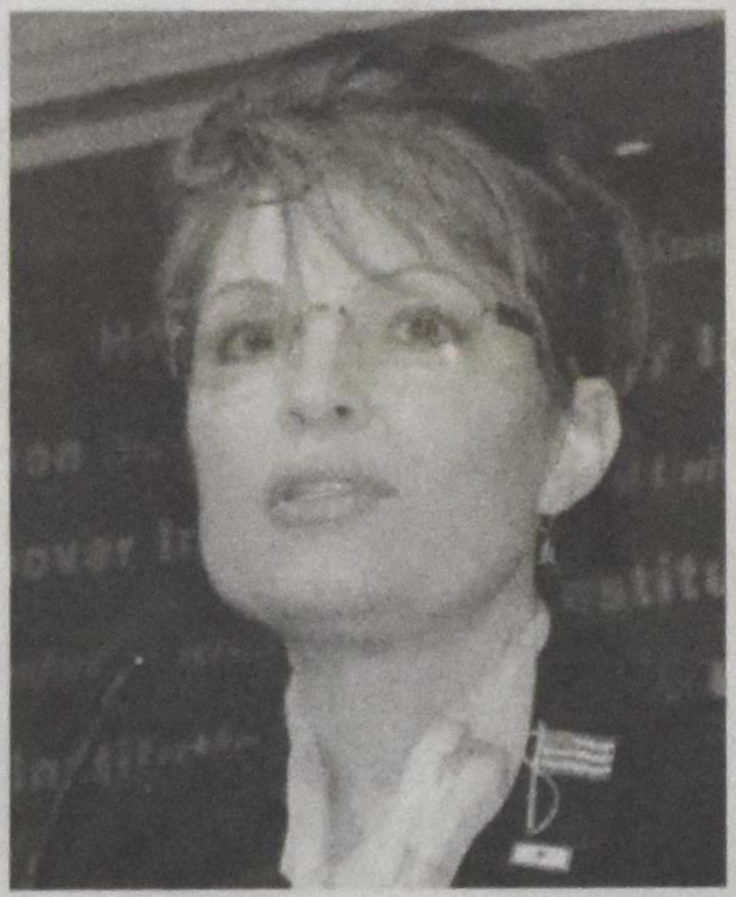
And how fascinating to discover that feminism has to be the right brand according to Gloria Steinem! Steinem believes that Palin is the wrong woman with the wrong message: "Palin's value to [Republican] patriarchs is clear: She opposes just about every issue that women support by a majority or plurality. She believes that creationism should be taught in public schools but disbelieves global warming; she opposes gun control but supports government control of women's wombs; she opposes stem cell research but approves 'abstinence only' programs which increase unwanted births, sexually transmitted diseases and abortions; she tried to use taxpayers' millions for a state program to shoot wolves from the air but didn't spend enough money to fix a state school system with the lowest high-school graduation rate in the nation.

Who knew that most American women are against shooting wolves from the air?

Many questions

There is so much to debate and disagree on in this run-up to the November 4 presidential election. Was McCain's choice of Palin insightful or just impulsive, in keeping with his reputation for being a maverick? If the vetting of Palin was rushed and incomplete, can we expect more skeletons in the closet? Who is the most inexperienced? Obama or Palin? Palin is a heartbeat away from the presidency if the Republican ticket wins; Obama *is* the heartbeat if he and Biden win. What is required for greater moral leadership in the world – diplomacy and humility or aggressive military action? Is security America's greatest challenge, or is it justice and righteousness? And when all the rhetoric has been stripped away from the campaigns, what will emerge as the real force for good?

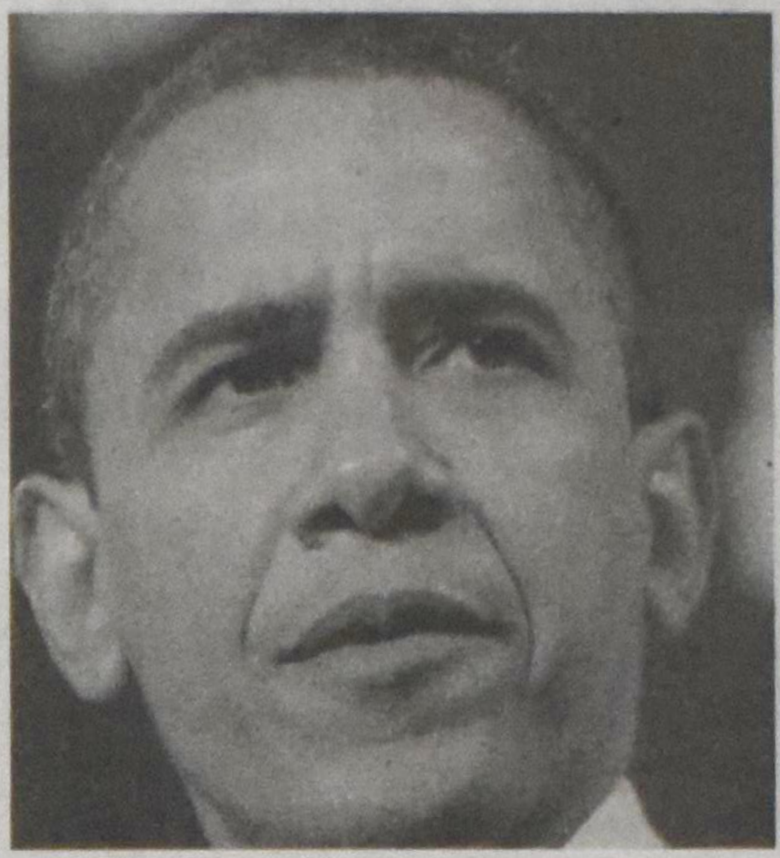
The American people will decide, and, according to the myth that all believers in democracy profess, the people are always right.

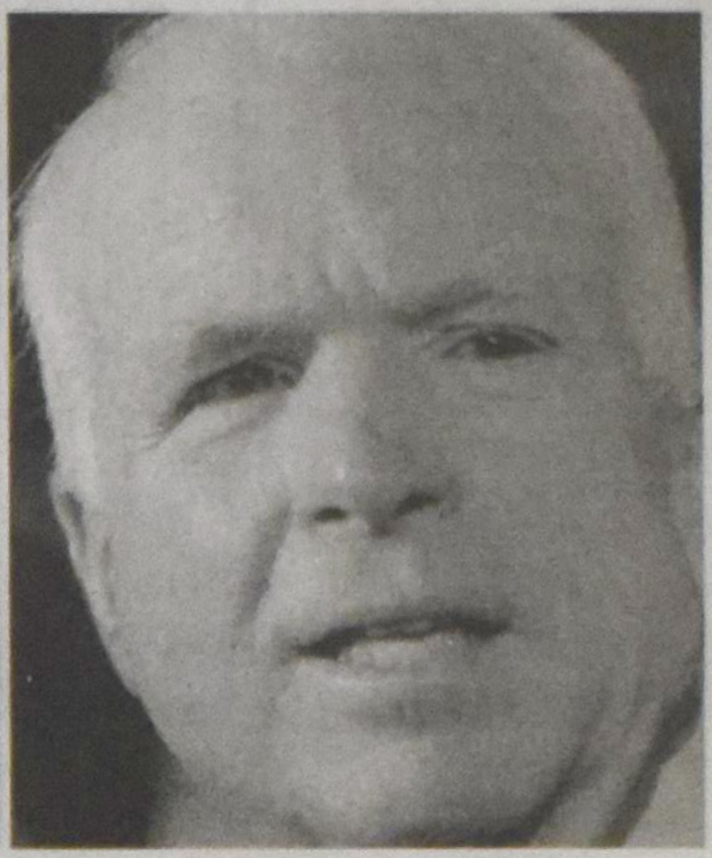


Sarah Palin

Barak Obama versus John McCain

Bert Witvoet





According to Father Raymond J. de Sousa, R.C. priest and columnist for the *National Post*, Oprah Winfrey chose to support Senator Obama as the candidate for the presidency of the United States because he embodies her philosophy that personal affirmation is the heart of transformational change. Oprah's message is a message of self-esteem and self-improvement as the path to positive change. It is a deeply seductive message, writes de Sousa, that the solution to every problem lies not in self-sacrifice for others but in taking care of one's own needs. How do we improve the broken world around us? We take care of ourselves.

Obama's approach to politics is a therapeutic approach, according to de Sousa. He is another Great Self, who offers himself as an exemplary model of healing, reconciliation, prosperity and peace. Is this the basis of the hope that Barak Obama awakens in so many Americans when they hear him?

How does John McCain stack up against this therapeutic approach? McCain's story seems to imply an emphasis on self-sacrifice and necessary pain. He brought the convention to its feet when he recounted the story of his capture and torture in Vietnam in the 70s.

McCain experienced what amounted to a conversion from being his own independent self to being a servant of his country. The line that brought the loudest and most prolonged applause was: I wasn't my own man anymore. I was my country's. (The *Heidelberg Catechism* might want to edit that statement and revise it to: I wasn't my own man anymore, but I now belonged body and soul to my faithful Saviour, Jesus Christ. But that is wishful thinking.)

McCain rejected an early release from captivity because he did not want to accept any special favours as a son of an American admiral, and thus hurt the morale of other American prisoners who had been captured before him. Although the religion he seems to espouse is civil religion rather than the Christian religion, he, nevertheless, made a profound statement when he said, Nothing brings greater happiness to yourself than to serve a cause greater than yourself. And no one can deny the nobility of his decision to serve others.

But no matter how you make the cookies of these two candidates crumble, they don't represent the full message of the Christian answer to the problem of evil. Neither self-esteem and positive vibes, nor self-sacrifice and service to one's country make much a dent in a world where evil forces rally their troops in many different ways. Human goodness and self-esteem don't bring about justice and mercy. Love for one's country does not ban hatred and distrust.

Oh, to live in a world where leaders echo the words of Micah 6:8; *Do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with your God.*

Polls *continued from p. 1*

me can warn boyfriends to keep their paws off our daughters until they're 16, but preferably a lot longer.

"Idiots who race fast cars down residential streets could end up parked in jail without their vehicles. Those who drive high on drugs can now have bodily fluids extracted for testing to secure impaired convictions.

"Immigration policy has been refocused on applicants the economy needs, not those who would likely land in welfare lineups. Hundreds of "lost" Canadians denied their rightful status have had their citizenship restored.

"Consumers have improved food labelling, although that's no comfort to listeria-poisoning victims, and Canada led the world in banning bisphenol A products such as baby bottles after the chemical was found to be a hormonal disrupter.

"The government has put a candle in the Canadian military's "decade of darkness." We now have new helicopters, tanks and armoured vehicles coming soon to bolster a mission in Kandahar.

"Our increasingly important Arctic coastline is being reasserted under Canadian control with stepped-up patrols, aggressive mapping and wider jurisdictional.

"Sessions between Cabinet ministers and lobbyists seeking political favours are allegedly a thing of the past.

"The old $5,000 Liberal limit on donations to parties, candidates or leadership hopefuls has been lowered to a modest $1,000 annual maximum.

"The government has moved to regulate reductions of greenhouse gases over the longer term. National parks, particularly in the north, have been dramatically expanded in size.

"Senators are being targeted for fixed terms and possibly forced to stand for election in the future.

"Compensation and an emotional apology in the Commons was delivered to the victims of the decades-old native residential school tragedy. Less dramatic apologies were issued for the Chinese head tax."

New issues?

What will be the issues in this upcoming election? Although the speeches have not been given yet, it appears that the emphasis will be on loss of jobs in the automotive industry, global warming and the extent to which each party will go green, the image of each party leader (right now 50 percent of Canadians think Stephen Harper will make the best prime minister, with 31 percent for Jack Layton and 20 percent for Stephane Dion), the necessity for an election, the Liberal Party's carbon tax proposal, the fight against crime, and the war in Afghanistan. This being a Canadian election one can almost be sure that abortion, patriotism and military service on the part of the candidates will not be on the agenda.

News

Smoking and love

My window seat

Mendelt Hoekstra

I saw an old pal at our church last week. His family are members of another church a few towns away. He and I went to the same university. He was two years older so we didn't know each other well, but we still knew each other and I like to think, respected each other. Although I wasn't nearly as accomplished an athlete as he was while in university, we both played varsity sports.

A couple of years ago both our sons played on the same baseball team. He helped me coach the team. I consider him to be a good, solid guy.

When I walked into church, our eyes met. We both nodded and smiled. After church we spoke for a few minutes. We had a deep, nice, meaningful conversation about the hardships of life. When we left the conversation I asked him to please say hello to his wife for me. He couldn't say the same.

Five minutes later I saw him again. He was in the parking lot. He was smoking.

He watched me walk out of church with five children, three of my own and two of my friends that I was watching for the day. One adult, five kids.

I'm sure he felt bad about smoking in front of someone who held Marisa, a non-smoker, through a year of chemotherapy. I think he felt bad about it because he said to me, "I still can't kick the habit".

We looked at each other. I didn't know what to say. I thought about many different responses and the only one that was verbalized was, "I love you man".

I loaded the kids in the van. I kept thinking about him. More specifically, I kept thinking about his beautiful wife and their three beautiful kids. I started to drive out of the parking lot when I saw him again. I stopped the van, got out and walked up to him. I put my hands on his shoulders and said, "Besides 'I love you', my emotional response to your smoking is this: I don't neccesarily worry about you because, as a disciple, you can understand Grace as well as an earthly mind can. I don't necessarily worry about your wife because she can, too. I worry about your children. I worry about your children because time and time again I am realizing that when I put the kids to bed, I was wrong. I was wrong in thinking that the most difficult thing in my life would be having to say good bye to Marisa. I was wrong because the most difficult thing in my life is watching our children grieve and suffer. Because that is torture. That is a glimpse of hell."

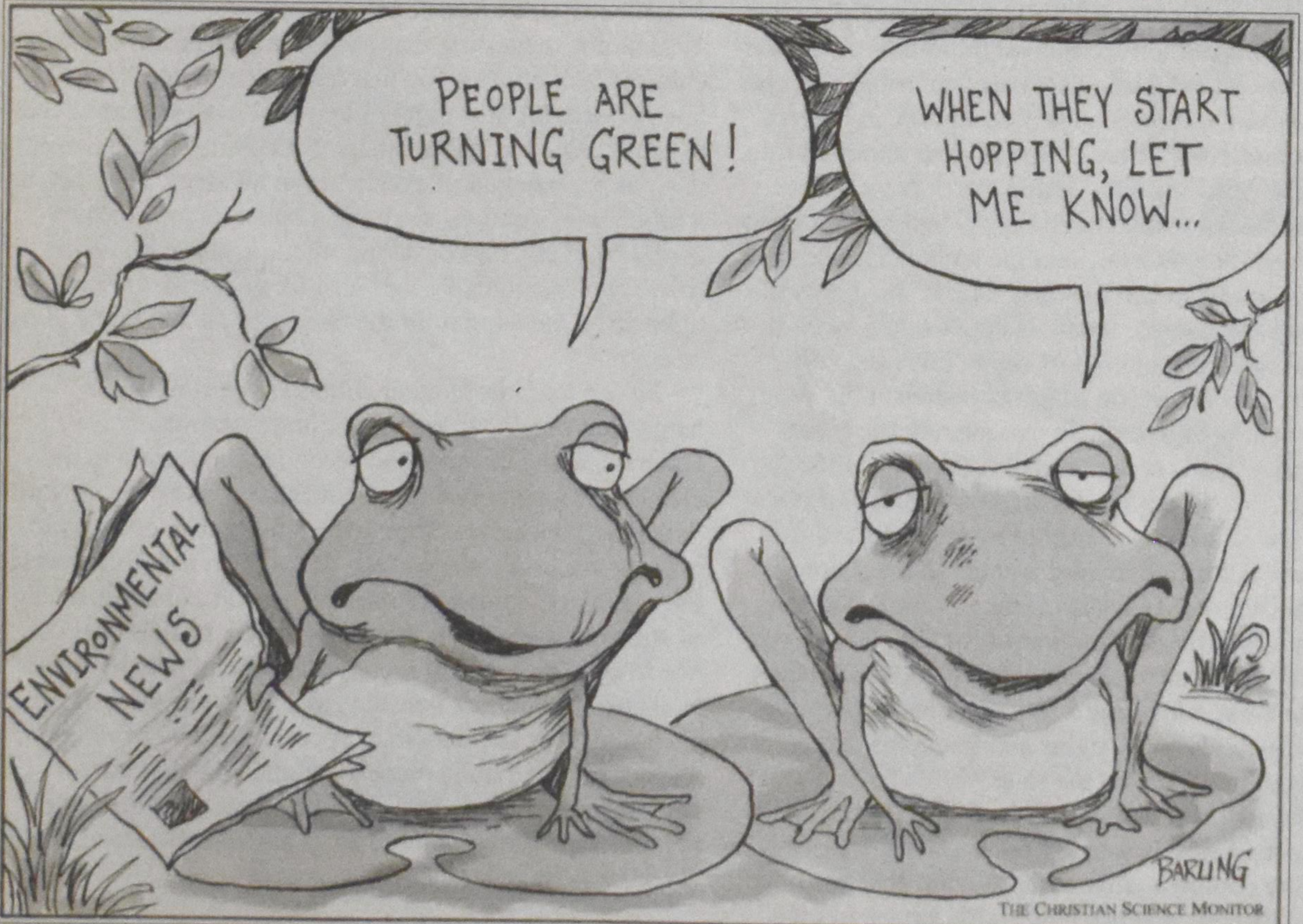
Not wanting to be hypocritical and knowing full well that I used to love the smell and taste of a lit cigarette at a campfire, but still wanting to make my point, I went on.

I said, "I hope I don't come across as poisonous righteous, because that is not what I want to be. I just want to let you know that when I saw you smoking, I thought of your kids."

He looked at me. I don't think he was surprised because I think he knows that I am an emotional beast, but I think he was pensive. I didn't want to leave the conversation without some options, so I gave him a semi-suggestion. I said, "I have an idea. Stop smoking now and start again when you are 60. Then your kids will be older and can most likely handle it better." He smiled.

I walked back to the van. I hope that I came across as speaking the truth in love. I was hoping that I didn't annoy him. I don't know that I did. I also don't know that I didn't. But I did feel better because, just before I stepped into the van, he said to me, "I love you, too, man."

Mendelt D. Hoekstra is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda, an organization owned and operated by the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Ontario, that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives in Vineland, ON his three children.



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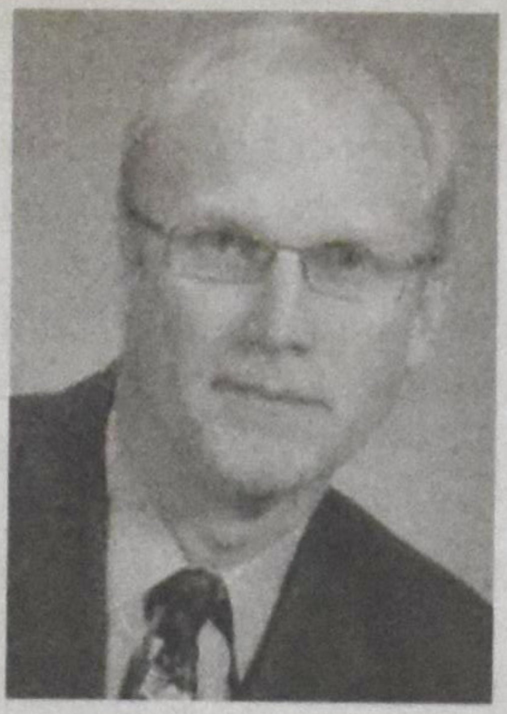

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Guest editorial

Not all cultures are created equal

Bert Witvoet

In Western democratic societies we have developed the myth that all cultures are of equal value, and that it amounts to racism to criticize another person's or another society's culture. Nowhere has this fallacy been practiced more fervently than in the Netherlands.

With the influx of new immigrants and refugees in the '80s and '90s, Dutch society felt it was wrong to insist that newcomers adapt to their new homeland, that they and their children should learn to speak Dutch, and that they should avoid living in ethnic ghettos. This attitude came out of a feeling of guilt about past historical wrongs (think of Dutch colonialism) and a rejection of anything that smells of conservatism – the bane of the highest Dutch virtue: tolerance. The emptiness of this false tolerance becomes evident in the fact that many Dutch people are averse to singing the Dutch national anthem or raising the Dutch flag because it smacks of national pride. How silly and unbalanced can you get!

Historical amnesia

Ever since the Second World War, Dutch society has reacted strongly against its religious past. Dutch society had splintered into many factions (the term used is pillarization). Every religious group was represented in separate social and political groups. Even today in Holland there is no such thing as a majority government. All Dutch governments are coalition governments. That's quite a difference between the Netherlands and the United States, for example, where two parties dominate the political scene (you're either "red" or "blue"). In Canada political power is brokered between four parties and a majority government is a possibility, though not a reality of late. Although the Netherlands has benefitted immensely from its Christian heritage, many of its inhabitants take great pleasure in ridiculing faith in God. Their view of history seems characterized by humility, but in fact, it comes out of pride – the idea that they are the inventors of justice.

Lack of integration

One of the benefits of its Christian past is that Dutch people tend to be very generous. Tons of money gets collected on a regular basis for foreign aid. The social network in Holland provides generous support to newcomers, almost to the extent that it pays not to work. Not being involved in the formal economy hinders social integration for those who live off welfare. As a result, Dutch society consists of vast numbers of mini-societies that do not speak Dutch and that, in fact, look down on the Dutch.

This is especially true of the majority of Muslim newcomers. Their children are told that their host society is evil, that Dutch people are immoral. If a Muslim girl falls in love with a Dutch non-Muslim boy, she runs the risk of being killed either in Holland or in the country of origin where honour killings are easily accepted. This honour killing can be done by her father, brother or uncle (any male relative will do) to preserve the reputation of the family. A government study of two of 25 regions in the Netherlands revealed to a shocked population that, in the span of eight months, eleven Muslim girls had fallen victim to honour killing. What would the number be if all 25 regions had been polled? Something is wrong with a culture or religious group that practices honor killing in the name of Allah. Indeed, not all cultures are created equal. Last year a Muslim girl in Toronto was killed by her father because she liked to dress in Western clothing.

The voice of an insider

I have just finished reading the book *Infidel* by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a former Dutch politician who had come to Holland as a refugee from Somalia. Hirsi Ali has since moved to the United States where she does research. The purpose of the writing of the book was to awaken Dutch society and the world to the reality of the oppression of women in Muslim societies. Young girls are routinely incised on kitchen tables, children are beaten by their parents, women are beaten by their husbands, brothers have authority over older sisters, fathers can force on their daughters whatever marriage they deem suitable, women may not wear clothing that exposes their legs, arms and necks, they may not go out in public without a male escort, husbands have complete sexual control over their wife's body (her body is referred to in the Quran as "tillage"), a woman is solely responsible for adultery.

Islam needs to change

Hirsi Ali writes: "The kind of thinking I saw in Saudi Arabia, and among the Muslim Brotherhood in Kenya and Somalia, is incompatible with human rights and liberal values. It preserves a feudal mind-set based on tribal concepts of honor and shame. It rests on self-deception, hypocrisy, and double standards." These attitudes were imported into Holland by the Muslims who settled there. What upset Hirsi Ali was that so many Dutch people believe that Islam is a peaceful religion. Not so, says the author. The Quran is "a very tribal and Arab version of events. It spreads a culture that is brutal, bigoted, fixated on controlling women, and harsh in war." She and others began criticizing the moral and cultural relativism of leftist parties in the West.

Hirsi Ali continues to explain that making the transition to a society that is honest and transparent is difficult. But, she adds, "we in the West would be wrong to prolong that pain of transition unnecessarily by elevating cultures full of bigotry and hatred toward women to the stature of respectable alternative ways of life…. Life is better in Europe than it is in the Muslim world because human relations are better, and one reason human relations are better is that, in the West, life on earth is valued in the here and now, and individuals enjoy rights and freedoms that are recognized and protected by the state."

A Canadian Muslim woman, Raheel Raza wrote another helpful critique of Islam in her book *Their Jihad…Not My Jihad.* She confirms what other Muslim scholars have been saying, namely, that her religion "is frozen in time. Dialogue and debate, also known as *ijtehad*, an important cornerstone of Islam, has been deemed unnecessary evils and stopped since the 16th century." She is less critical of the Quran and of the heart of Islam than is Hirsi Ali, who has rejected her religion. In fact, Hirsi Ali has stopped believing in any God. Ms. Raza believes that there are two Islams practiced today – one the Islam of the Prophet Mohammad – the Islam of peace and forgiveness and compassion, of tolerance and spirit, women's rights and equality. The other Islam is the militant, extremist, fanatic cult of those who misappropriate religious teachings to justify murder, inflict destruction on human society in the name of Shari'a, subjugate and suppress minorities and women to promote injustice…." We probably need to balance her views with those of Hirsi Ali's, who speaks more out of her experiences in Somalia and Saudi Arabia.

The price of honesty

Speaking out so clearly against her own people and against her own faith meant that Hirsi Ali had to go in hiding and receive police protection. She and film maker Theo Van Gogh had cooperated in making a short film called *Submission*, and it was that film about the way Islam made its adherents slaves of the past that resulted in death threats to both. Van Gogh was, in fact, assassinated by a Muslim fanatic in broad daylight. Even today, Hirsi Ali's life is still in danger because she spoke the truth about the Islamic culture she knows. She rails against political correctness that prevents newspapers and politicians from pointing out that not all cultures are created equal.

I personally ran up against this blindness when a young woman sent me an email after listening to one of my sermons a while ago. I had made the remark in my sermon that the two greatest enemies of Christianity today are hostile secularism and radical Islam. She did not think that secularism was a problem, and, secondly, she knew from contact with some Muslim women in Toronto that Islam is a religion of peace. I suppose watching the juvenile CBC comedy *Little Mosque on the Prairie* would re-enforce this benign view of Islam. It's this very naïve attitude towards Islam that Hirsi Ali warns against.

Multi-cultural benefits

I am not suggesting that we become insensitive to other cultures. Nor am I saying that our way of doing things is always superior. It is highly likely that most cultures excel in some areas and fail in others. No culture should present itself as the paragon of excellence in all areas. Together, as a rainbow of cultures, we have a better chance of interacting fruitfully and of taking up the cultural mandate given by God: to make the most of what this world has to offer and to develop it for the benefit of all and to the glory of God.

We can learn from other cultures. I personally am happy that I know at least two cultures intimately well. Having had my primary and secondary education in the Netherlands, and my tertiary education and career in North America, I understand that there is more than one way to express ourselves as a society. Schools do well to immerse their learners in other cultures. Multi-culturalism as a way of showing respect for diversity can be a healthy practice in education and in society as a whole, **provided** we evaluate each culture honestly, including our own, using such standards as freedom of speech, freedom of religion, respect for life, public modesty, human dignity, interpersonal respect, freedom from violence, and equality of opportunity. When a culture lacks any of these standards, it deserves to be critiqued.

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EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Editor: Harry der Nederlanden editor@christiancourier.ca
Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden rose@christiancourier.ca
Accounts/Advertising Manager: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer ads@christiancourier.ca

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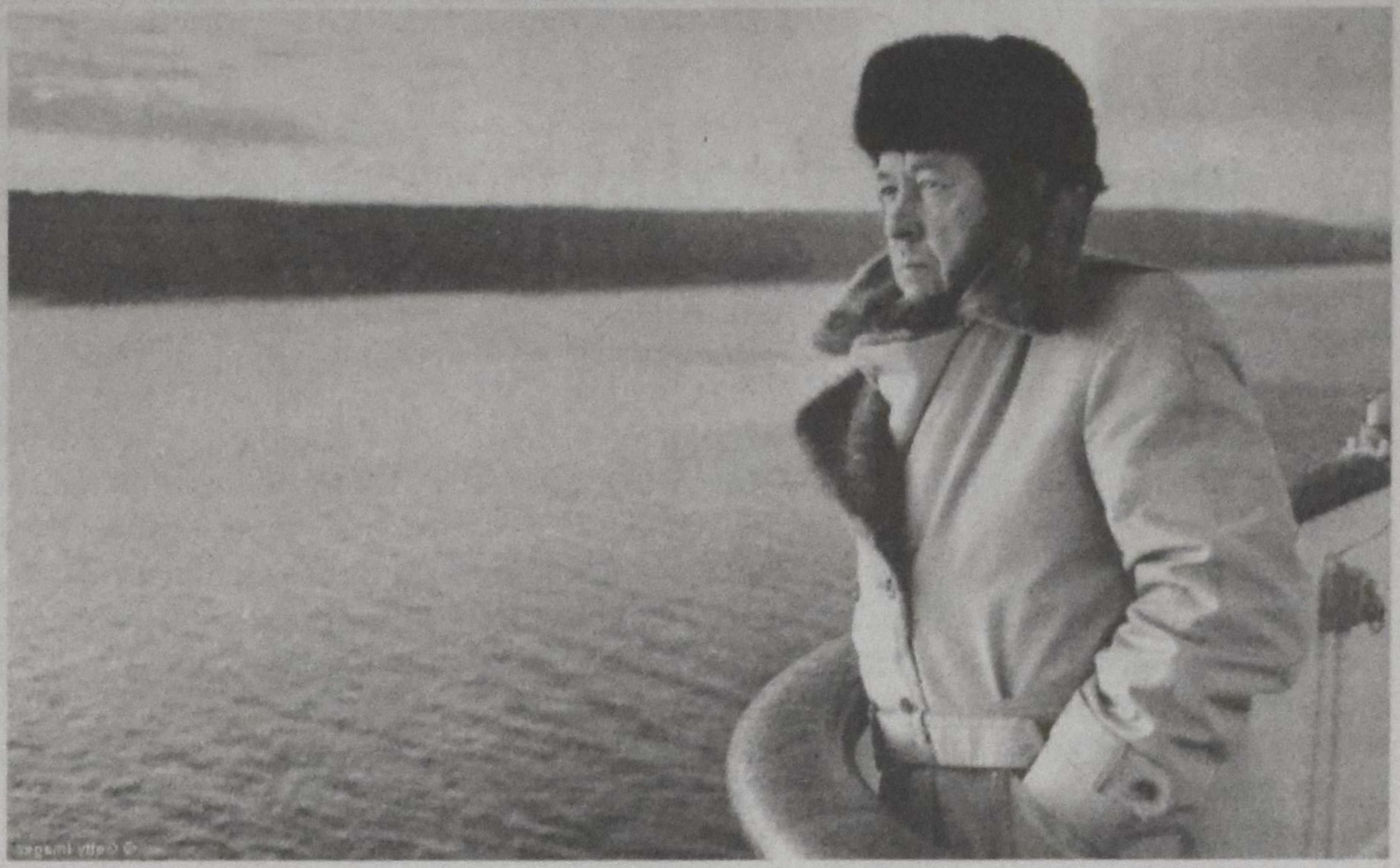
Legacies

Alexander Solzhenitsyn: A prophet to the world



You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free. (Jesus)

One word of truth shall outweigh the whole world. (Solzhenitsyn)

We are all, each in his own way, bound together by a common fate, by the same bands of iron. And all of us are standing on the brink of a great historical cataclysm, a flood that swallows up civilizations and changes whole epochs. (Solzhenitsyn, BBC Interview, March 1976)

Harry Antonides

On Sunday, August 3, after a day of working at his desk, Solzhenitsyn felt ill, gave some final instructions to his wife and son, and then was gone from this earth. With that one of the bravest and indomitable voices for truth and freedom of the soul was silenced.

But his life's work of witness against the lies and depravity of the communist dictatorship lives on in his voluminous and soul-stirring writings. It is up to us, the living, to ensure that future generations will remember and honour this exceptional witness of the truth.

Hard beginnings and imprisonment

Alexander Isayevich Solzhenitsyn was born on December 11, 1918, in Kislovodsk, Russia, closely coinciding with the birth of a regime that would bring untold misery and death to the long-suffering Russian people. No one could then have had an inkling that this baby, born to an impoverished widow would, against unbelievable odds, not only outlive that murderous tyranny but also mightily contribute to its destruction.

Shortly before his birth his father died in a hunting accident, leaving his mother and an aunt to raise Alexander in harsh circumstances. They moved to Rostov on the Don where he attended school and early felt drawn toward a literary education. Lacking an opportunity to pursue that course, he studied mathematics, a turn of events, he writes, that twice saved his life – because his skills landed him assignments during his imprisonment that helped to ease his circumstances and enabled him to begin writing. (See *The First Circle)*

During World War II he served as captain of an artillery company on the frontlines until his arrest in early 1945 when he was sentenced to eight years in a detention camp for having insulted Stalin in a letter to a friend. After serving out this sentence, he was exiled for life to southern Kazakhstan, where he taught mathematics and physics in primary schools. In 1953 he developed cancer and nearly died. (See *The Cancer Ward*) During his recovery he became a Christian helped by his discussions with a Jewish doctor who also was a Christian convert.

Giving voice to the voiceless

Solzhenitsyn kept writing in secret, always fearing that his manuscripts would be found and confiscated. He wrote in his autobiography:

> *During all these years until 1961, not only was I convinced that I should never see a single line of mine in print in my lifetime, but, also, I scarcely dared allow any of my close acquaintances to read anything I had written because I feared that this would become known.*

That changed when in 1962 Khrushchev began to relax some controls, and Solzhenitsyn was allowed to publish what soon became a sensation, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich.* This book was the first of its kind to be published in Russia, detailing the mind-sapping existence in the brutal camps. But above all, it was a testimony to the strength of the human spirit in dreadful surroundings. But soon the regime tightened the screws again and Solzhenitsyn became a non-person.

Meanwhile, he secretly worked away at composing his memoirs. Although the KGB managed to seize some of his manuscripts, he continued working on the massive three-volume *Gulag Archipelago*, which he managed to smuggle out of Russia and have published in the West, beginning in 1974.

The *Gulag* books are a detailed look based on Solzhenitsyn's own experience, as well as on the testimony of 227 inmates of the camps, at the horrors of the Soviet system, where millions of voiceless Russians were worked, starved and beaten to death. The appearance of this first-hand testimony of the brutality at the core of the communist system exposed the bitter reality: the communist regime was built on a foundation of violence and falsehood. At the same time, Solzhenitsyn's witness against this evil was suffused with his rock-like conviction that this regime could not withstand the power of truth and therefore would eventually disintegrate.

Finally, the lost and beaten millions perishing in the death camps had found a voice. To realize that someone had succeeded in telling their story to the whole world gave new hope to a broken and abandoned people. In contrast, to the Kremlin masters this first-person exposure of the reality they so much wanted to keep hidden was a disaster that they desperately tried to avert.

Solzhenitsyn's survival and then the widespread distribution of his shocking revelations represented a mighty blast against what President Reagan called the "evil empire" and no doubt helped to hasten the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In 1970 he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. He did not attend the ceremony for fear that he would be barred from re-entering his beloved homeland. In his absence, Karl Ragnar Gierow of the Swedish Academy made the presentation speech in which he recognized Solzhenitsyn as one in the company of the great Russian authors.

Exile and return

Four years later he was stripped of his citizenship and deported to West Germany. He lived for a time in Switzerland, then moved to the United States, and in 1976 settled in Cavendish, Vermont. There he continued writing and publishing a number of novels, a history of the Russian Revolutions (1905 and 1917), his memoirs on his stay in the West, a history of Russian-Jewish relations, and many other works. In 1994 he returned to Russia where until his death he continued his arduous work schedule, ably assisted by his wife, Natalia, and other family members.

As he had used his pen to fight the ideology and practice of communism, Solzhenitsyn was no less critical of the shallow and hedonistic notion of freedom now driving the Western democracies. It is exactly on that score that Solzhenitsyn lost many of his initial admirers and supporters in the West. For he never tailored his message to what they wanted to hear. The liberal elite looked on Christianity, which Solzhenitsyn had embraced, as a relic of the past and an obstacle to progress and true freedom.

Solzhenitsyn wrote of his conversion to the Christian faith when he lay on his bed near death, utterly alone, bereft of any external source of comfort. It was then that he felt overcome by an amazing sense of God's presence that flooded his soul with a super human peace. But at the same time he came to the realization that evil is not just out there, in the enemy, but as he put it:

> *It was on rotting prison straw that I felt the first stirrings of good in myself. Gradually it became clear to me that the line separating good from evil runs not between states, not between classes, and not between parties – it runs through the heart of each and every one of us, and through all human hearts.*

A hard message

Thirty years ago, Solzhenitsyn addressed a crowd at Harvard on "A World Split Apart." The title referred to the split between two world powers, but he meant much more than the conflict between communism and the democratic West.

He began by reflecting on Harvard's motto "Veritas" (Truth), which easily eludes us, and that in any case often is unpleasant and even bitter.

The thrust of his message to the elite Harvard audience was that the seeds of the

See **Solzhenitsyn** *on page 6*

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Memories

A farm boy's childhood memories

My mother wasn't a strict and overprotective mom. I could do whatever I wanted to do outside as long as I was back to help with chores. Mother was very particular about food. We never had margarine or baloney in the house. No processed meats. Now with the Maple Leaf tainted meats – uh, processed foods – I thought of what mother used to say. Processed meats have too much fat and salt.

Mother said some people died in Holland when margarine was first introduced – something about the early hydrogenation process. She called it a bad factory food. We always used butter. The price didn't matter. And money was tight in the 1950s and "60s. Mother made good wholesome healthy meals.

As a farm boy growing up on a small farm near Eganville, Ont. I spent most of my summers in the great outdoors. I built forts in the bush and made rafts in the swamp and floated the things around in the swamp water.

I kept many rabbits and plucked grass and clovers for them. Rabbits were fattened for the table (ours).

I biked for miles picking bottles. I biked to see friends. I biked to fish in the river. When my CRC friend Harry came over to visit for a week, it would be a very dull Sunday afternoon for me. Harry's mother let it be known that he couldn't bike on Sundays. I wouldn't bike either. Harry read comic books on Sunday. He had stacks of them that he'd take along. My mother said she rather see us riding our bikes on Sundays than to see Harry read comic books. I didn't like comics.

At 5 o'clock in the afternoon it was my job to get the cows and bring them to the barn to be milked. Father usually worked off the farm after the hay was done in mid-July and he'd be home around 6. We'd eat supper and then dad, mom and I would milk the cows by hand. It could be a sweaty job sitting on a stool between hot cows.

We were always early risers and cows were all milked before 7:30. It was a sure sign of rain if the front barn door blew shut while we were milking. That meant the wind was from the east. Rain was always welcome.

At night the cows pastured in a little field behind the barn, but during the day they went to the rough pasture in the bush. We had 50 acres of bush and beside us was a 100 acre bush lot that we rented for pasture. And there was another 50 acres of bush where the cows could go if they wanted to. There were no fences which meant the cows could be anywhere in the 200 acres.

Most summer days the cows would be heading home to be milked and I'd meet them on the well-worn cow path. If I didn't see them I'd call and yell out. I didn't use the silly words "cobus, cobus, cobus". And I didn"t yell out "come-mon girls". I used even sillier language. I said, "come-mon boys, lets go". The cows all had names like Rosie, Blackie, Dickie, Blaar, Coba and Harmke. There was always a lead cow and cows would follow her.

The bush had little clearings where the cows usually grazed. I would check there first. I always looked for fresh manure droppings. On hot and humid days the cows could be farther in the bush standing in a waterhole. Some days there was a lot of walking and running.

I recall a few times finding the cows and not knowing how to get back on the trail. I was never really lost, but just followed the cows and they always knew which way go to get on the main trail and home.

Winters I helped in the bush cutting and hauling out logs, pulpwood, cedar posts and firewood. I got to know the bush like the back of my hand. All those years getting cows and working in the bush I never saw a bear, a wolf or a deer.

There's more wildlife now. The other day I hauled second-cut hay from the backfield. Two deer were grazing on clover. I spotted a young coyote watching me from the edge of a cornfield. He'd duck in and out of the corn. A fisher watched the tractor coming closer and ran into a small bush lot. I spotted the coyote and the fisher a few times this summer.

No bears out our way!

Maynard van der Galien runs a Red Angus and Charolais cow-calf farm near Renfrew, Ont. He writes weekly columns – something he's done for 20 years.

Solzhenitsyn *continued from page 5*

disaster that has befallen the Russian people are also present in the free West. Solzhenitsyn said that he discerned a kind of spiritual, moral sickness in the West that has ominous implications for its future. Here is a summary of the warning signs listed in his Harvard speech.

A decline in courage. This may be the "most striking feature" of the West, which has lost its civil courage. Such loss is most noticeable among the ruling groups and the intellectual elite. Although there are still many courageous individuals, they have no real influence on public life. History has shown that decline in courage is often the beginning of the end.

Well-being. The modern Western states were created to cater to the popular desire for happiness, which has resulted in the welfare state. Every citizen is given maximum freedom and material goods. What has been overlooked is that the desire for ever more goods and a still better life gives rise to worry and frustration. Furthermore, when generations are accustomed to seeing their happiness in the good life understood in materialistic terms, why should they risk their life in the defence of common values? ("Better Red than dead.") An extreme emphasis on safety and well being in today's welfare state "has begun to reveal its pernicious mask."

Legalistic life. Western society is organized around the letter of the law. But this has given rise to applying the law in a manipulative way so that the moral rule is trumped by the desire to win at any cost without any self-restraint. A regime, such as communism, without any legal rules is a terrible one, but a society with no other standard than a legal one is also unworthy of man. It will be impossible to stand through the trials of our threatening age with only the support of a legalistic structure, for it will give rise to "an atmosphere of moral mediocrity, paralyzing man's noblest impulses."

The direction of freedom. Freedom is now seen and experienced as freedom for good as well as for evil deeds. Statesmen who want to accomplish something important will be confronted with many traps. The emphasis on individual rights has undermined administrative power, but what now needs to be emphasized is not human rights but human obligations.

Destructive freedom has made society defenceless against human decadence and criminality. While this speech was given in 1978, Solzhenitsyn showed real foresight in saying that when a government starts to fight terrorism in earnest, it is accused of violating the terrorists' civil rights. This tilt of freedom in the direction of evil results from the humanistic belief that there is no evil inherent to human nature. Instead, evil is seen to arise from wrong social systems, which must be corrected.

The direction of the press. Here too the emphasis is on the letter of the law, but there is no moral responsibility for deformation or disproportion. Every day the public is exposed to hasty, immature, superficial and misleading judgments. Thus we see terrorists treated as heroes, secret matters pertaining to a nation's security publicized, or the privacy of well-known people intruded with the false slogan: "Everyone is entitled to know everything."

"Enormous freedom exists for the press, but not for the readership because newspapers mostly give enough stress and emphasis to those opinions which do not too openly contradict their own and the general trend."

A fashion of thinking. Without formal censorship in the West, there has nevertheless developed a trend in which certain fashionable ideas always predominate in the media and literature. "This gives birth to strong mass prejudices, blindness, which is most dangerous in our dynamic era." This self-deluding interpretation of the contemporary world becomes a "petrified armor around people's minds." (Although Solzhenitsyn did not use the term, here he is obviously referring to what is now called "political correctness.")

Socialism. Although the West has experienced unprecedented economic development and prosperity, many living in the West are dissatisfied with their own society. Some of them have turned to socialism, but it is a false and dangerous current. The Soviet mathematician Shafarevich has written a brilliant book, *The Socialist Phenomenon*, showing that socialism in any type and shade "leads to a total destruction of the human spirit and to a leveling of mankind into death."

Shortsightedness. Many in the West believe that we cannot apply moral criteria to politics. But such a position implies that we mix good and evil, right and wrong, and that we pave the way for the triumph of absolute Evil in the world. The truth is that only moral criteria can help the West against communism's well-planned strategy. Without such criteria, confusion will remain, and we will not even recognize the enemy for what it is.

This explains the ignorance about the real meaning of the Vietnam War and the betrayal of Far Eastern nations that caused untold suffering and death to millions. American pacifists thought that they had won, but their contribution was to immobilize the nation's courage. It was the same ignorance that thought the Soviet Union was an ally against Nazi Germany. In fact, Western democracies helped to nurture the Soviet Union with a large number of admirers in the West as a "fifth column."

Loss of willpower. The current state of the West is one of psychological weakness marked by a refusal to defend itself. Hence the possibility that the next war will bury Western civilization. How has such a sad sate come about?

Humanism* and its consequences. Solzhenitsyn asks: "How did the West decline from its triumphal march to its present sickness?" His answer is bound to alienate most if not all of the Western elite, because he traces the problem back to the prevailing view of the Western world as it developed in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. This is the view that humans are supreme, self-sufficient, and therefore are not subject to any authority above themselves. Solzhenitsyn refers to this as "rationalistic humanism" or "humanistic autonomy," which can also be called "anthropocentricity."

While the Middle Ages had exhausted itself in repressing man's physical nature in favour of the spiritual, the Enlightenment took the opposite turn. Then the worship of man and his happiness became the goal by means of unlimited freedom in the use and control of the physical world. As a result man's sense of responsibility to God has grown dimmer and dimmer, allowing evil to have free reign.

Stewardship

Karl Marx could say, "communism is naturalized humanism." He was right, and that is why the communist regime in the East "could stand and grow due to the enthusiastic support of an enormous number of Western intellectuals who felt a kinship and refused to see communism's crimes."

By placing our hope in political and social reforms, we deprived ourselves of our most precious possession, our spiritual life. Both the communist East and the democratic West are facing a crisis that can only be resolved by turning away form the current, dominant materialistic ideology.

Solzhenitsyn concluded his speech by saying that we have reached a turn in the road that is similar (in impact) to the turn from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance:

It will exact from us a spiritual upsurge, we shall have to rise to a new height of vision, to a new level of life where our physical nature will not be cursed as in the Middle Ages, but, even more importantly, our spiritual being will not be trampled upon as in the Modern era. This ascension will be similar to climbing onto the next anthropologic stage. No one on earth has any other way left but – upward.

Mixed responses

The liberal establishment, well represented in the audience, never forgave Solzhenitsyn for what it perceived to be a tongue-lashing by an anti-modern and anti- Western Russophile. *The New York Times* preferred the men of the Enlightenment to the "religious enthusiasts sure of their interpretation of the divine will." James Reston wondered whether Solzhenitsyn's exaltation of Russian spirituality did not reflect "a mind split apart." *The Washington Post* found Solzhenitsyn "very Russian" and resented his promotion of a "boundless cold war." (Michael Scammell, *Solzhenitsyn*, p.969l) And so it went.

On the other hand, many others were overwhelmingly in favour, and Solzhenitsyn is said to have received thousands of letters filled with admiration and enthusiastic support.

Controversy, not surprisingly, has accompanied Solzhenitsyn, especially in his later years when his influence in his homeland began to wane. But he never lagged in his zeal to warn the West. In all his speeches, interviews and books directly addressed to the West he elaborated on the theme set out in his Harvard speech. He did so in his 1983 Templeton Prize address, "Men Have Forgotten God," in which he stated:

All attempts to find a way out of the plight of today's world are fruitless unless we redirect our consciousness, in repentance, to the Creator of all; without this, no exit will be illumined, and we shall seek it in vain.

He expanded on this theme in more detail in his "Warning to the Western World," consisting of two interviews given on the BBC in March 1976. Here he gave numerous examples of Western cowardice and shortsightedness at the cost of millions of lives. He pleaded:

We, the oppressed peoples of Russia, the oppressed peoples of Eastern Europe, watch with anguish the tragic enfeeblement of Europe. We offer you the experience of our suffering; we would like you to accept it without having to pay the monstrous price of death and slavery that we have paid. But your society refuses to heed our warning voices. I suppose we must admit, sad though it is, that experience cannot be transmitted; everyone must experience everything for himself.

A compeling question

Solzhenitsyn was a mere human with all his faults and failings. He was often wrong, as when he compared NATO with Hitler's Nazis, and he grossly misjudged the character of Vladimir Putin. But he was right about the most momentous issue now facing the world. He forced us to face this question, as phrased by his biographer Michael Scammell: "Is this [the disaster of the Soviet regime] a temporary aberration of European culture…or the beginning of the end, the start of a general collapse of our civilization into barbarism."

Solzhenitsyn's answer was clear and unequivocal. What gave his message its unassailable force is that he spoke to us from the hellish crucible of the Soviet death camps. His message to us in the West was: "Look what happened when a godless regime takes over. Let our experience teach you not to continue on your current path of trying to live without God."

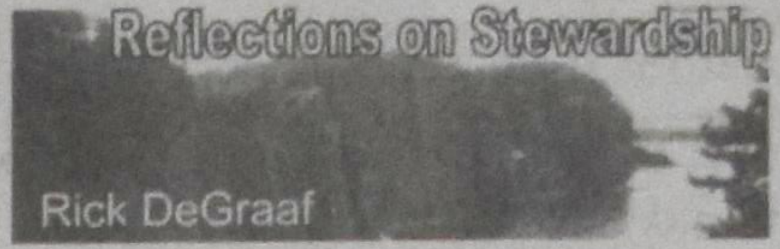
Some want to turn a blind eye to the threats facing our world. Others deny that there is a problem. Then there are the pessimists who think it is hopeless anyway, so let's eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. All of them dismiss Solzhenitsyn as a nuisance who can safely be ignored.

May I suggest that the right way to assess the life and work of Solzhenitsyn is to recognize it as a sign that God has not given up on this world. This powerful voice appearing from under the rubble of a ruined civilization is a living proof that Evil cannot ultimately destroy the Good. This is so because God so loved the world that he sent his Son into the world not to condemn it but to save it.

That this former atheist was used by God to confront the whole world with this truth must be one of the great wonders of this tumultuous age. The big question is: Do we have eyes to see and ears to hear?

** Not to be confused with humanitarianism, that is, seeking the welfare of all others. Here it refers to a philosophy of life based on the belief that humans are not bound by the divine law (secularism).*

Harry Antonides



Self-driven Stewardship or…

Ebenezer Scrooge is the main character in Charles Dickens' 1843 novel, *A Christmas Carol.* I'm certain most of you know who I am referring to. Consider: Was Scrooge a 'good' steward? Certainly he was known as frugal. He was extremely careful not to spend even a penny frivolously. Maybe at best he was a "tight" steward or a very frugal steward, but to say that he was a 'good' steward implies a lot more than being careful. I would not say that he was a 'good' steward.

A rich young ruler came up to Jesus one day and asked the question, *"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"* (Luke 18:18) Jesus basically told him to obey the 10 commandments. Then the ruler replied: *"All these I have kept since I was a boy."*(Luke 18:21). Then Jesus replied, *"You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."* (Luke 18:22) He couldn't do it and I don't think many of us could today.

Jesus' invitation was maybe too liberating. There is something really liberating that we miss out on when we cling too much to what we have. Consider our intentions behind our stewardship. Is it not true that my stewardship and yours is often driven by our own purposes first? To really lay our assets before the Lord: our skills, abilities, intellect, our time, our homes, our businesses, our possessions and our money – as Jesus challenged this rich young ruler to do – to really lay it out for the Lord's purposes first – means that we have to give up our precious control. We can be so protective and we do so because we want to be responsible, but sometimes we can be too protective, just like Scrooge. He was so protective of his wealth that he did not do anyone any 'good' and especially not for himself!

So often I find that Scripture turns things around and upside down. For example: "When I am weak then I am strong" or "the last shall be first". Scripture teaches us that when we relinquish control and invest in God's kingdom first – then all the rest will be added. When it comes to the stewardship of our stuff (all our assets) we need to be like Solomon and ask for wisdom. The more you have to "steward", the more wisdom you need. The more God entrusts to you, the more God is challenging you and the more wisdom and discernment you'll need to avoid being taken over by the wealth and power it brings.

A steward is not an owner, but we often act like we are. It helps to really think about what a steward must do. A steward acts on the owner's behalf and must always keep the owner's best interests in mind. God has a plan for the assets that you have – but not to 'scrooge' them – hoard them – but to benefit and to multiply his Kingdom.

So there is no such thing as' self driven stewardship' – it is a contradiction of terms. As Christian stewards our goal must be to replace **'self'** with **'spirit'** so that we are driven by a desire to serve God's purposes – the owner of all that we are and have. May God inspire your stewardship as we start a new Church and school year! May he enable you to be a blessing – so that others are blessed!

Stewardly tip: Crack open a Stewardship book. Grow in 'spirit-driven stewardship' by reading books like:

"The Treasure Principle" by Randy Alcorn,
"AFIRE with GOD" by Betsy Schwarzentraub
"FirstFruits" by Robert Heerspink
"Creating Congregations of Generous People" by Michael Durall.

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions (by mail to *Christian Courier* or by email to my address below) and provide your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask you for more details.

Next issue: Sustainability – a Rising Star?

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario
Rick's email: rickd@csservices.ca

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Church

Christian Pakistani girls abducted

Court gives Muslim kidnappers custody, but kidnappers thwarted

Marian Van Til, with files from ICC and Asia News

CHOWK MUNDA, PUNJAB, PAKISTAN – Two Christian girls kidnapped in late June from this village by a Muslim fruit vendor, his son and two other men are now in the care of a state-run women's shelter after suffering a harrowing ordeal.

The girls are 13- and 10-years old. Saba Younas, the 13-year-old, was forced to convert to Islam and marry Muhammad Amjid, the vendor's son, the day after her kidnap.

Saba and her sister Aneela were traveling to their uncle's house on June 26 when they disappeared. Two days later, the kidnappers filed for custody of the girls at their local police station on the basis that the girls had converted to Islam and therefore were no longer under their father's jurisdiction.

Their father, Younis Masih, finally discovered what had happened to his daughters when he was summoned by this police station to testify. When Masih tried to file a complaint against the kidnappers, the police officers told him to be silent since his daughters had allegedly embraced Islam in a written statement.

At his wit's end, Masih left the police station and started looking for a lawyer. Finally, on July 10, Masih and his wife were able to file an official court case after finding Rashid Rehman, who agreed to help them.

A medical examination ordered by the court concluded that Saba is 16- or 17-years old and had reached the puberty, despite the fact that her Catholic birth certificate plainly states she is 13. Her parents were not allowed to submit the birth certificate as evidence.

"After the medical report the chances of Saba's return are less," family lawyer Rashid Rehman says "because a 16- to 17-year old girl has reached puberty and 'is able' to get married.'"

Unfortunately, say observers, this is not an isolated incident. Christian girls have become targets for Muslim abductors because most their families have no recourse to get them back, and the courts frequently support the abductors.

A different outcome

On July 12 Judge Main Naeem Sardar ruled that the girls had indeed become Muslims, and thus their Christian parents no longer had legal guardianship over them. His ruling was based on five minutes of testimony from the girls, who appeared in court accompanied by 16 Muslim men. Pakistani law decrees that girls cannot marry without their guardian's consent if they are under the age of 16. Masih appealed the judge's decision.

After much prayer by Pakistani Christians and the intervention of Pakistani Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, on July 29 the appeals judge, Saghir Ahmed of the Multan Bench of Lahore High Court, entrusted the two sisters to the shelter where they are now living. The Commission has paid the legal fees incurred by the family, and has rallied the support of the entire Catholic community in the country. The trial was adjourned until August 4, when the judge was to have ruled on the possible return of the two sisters back to their home. There is no word yet, however, on the outcome of that ruling.

There is a small but significant Christian minority in Pakistan, though Pakistani Christians most often escape the attention of the West. This is not because they are silent. In the first half of 2008 alone, International Christian Concern (ICC), which calls attention to the plight of persecuted Christians around the world, posted more than 50 stories on their website about the persecution Christians are suffering in Pakistan. "We are constantly [contacted] by Pakistani Christians who either want to thank us for publicizing their struggles or who want to help us be more effective in assisting our Pakistani brothers," says ICC.

The Pope presents teaching series on the Apostle Paul

St. Paul's journeys show our deep need for the Gospel, says Benedict

VATICAN CITY (Zenit.org) – Benedict XVI says that the life of the Apostle Paul reveals the deep need *we* have of the Gospel; and we must pray that we, too, will be able to bring the light and truth of the Gospel to a world thirsting for it.

The Pope made that observation in a general audience last month as part of his teaching series on the life and teachings of "the Apostle to the Gentiles," begun in July for what Catholics are observing as the Pauline Jubilee Year.

Benedict initiated his teaching about Paul by presenting an overview of the apostle's whole life, beginning with scholarly theories regarding the year of Paul's birth, generally estimated to be around the year 8 A.D.

The Conversion of Saint Paul-Giordano Nancy

The 2000th anniversary of Paul's birth

"In fact, the celebration of the Pauline Year we are observing follows this chronology," said Benedict; "2008 was chosen thinking of his birth more or less in the year 8. In any case, Paul was born in Tarsus in Cilicia.... A Jew of the Diaspora, he spoke Greek although having a name of Latin origin, derived by assonance from the Hebrew original Saul/Saulos, and he held Roman citizenship."

Bendict said that "Paul seems to be situated, therefore, on the border of the various cultures – Roman, Greek, Hebrew – and perhaps also because of this, was disposed to fruitful universal openness, to a mediation between cultures, to a true universality." Naturally, Benedict also discussed "the extraordinary event that occurred on the road to Damascus, Paul's conversion, an essential change in his life that followed from his meeting with Christ," in Benedict's words.

Paul had learned manual work, Benedict XVI noted, reminding his listeners that the book of Acts say Paul was a tent maker – "To be understood, probably, as a laborer [using] coarse goat's wool or linen fibers to make mats or tents." And when Paul was 12 or 13 years old, he "left Tarsus and went to Jerusalem to be educated at the feet of Rabbi Gamaliel the Elder, nephew of the great Rabbi Hillel, according to the most rigid norms of Pharisaism, acquiring a great zeal for the Mosaic Torah."

Nevertheless, the Pope noted, "Paul passed into history more as a Christian, what is more, as an apostle, than as a Pharisee. His apostolic activity is subdivided traditionally on the basis of three missionary journeys, to which is added a fourth – his journey to Rome as a prisoner. All are narrated by Luke in the Acts."

'Come and help us'

The Pope then recounted the extent of Paul's travels and the importance of his preaching for the early church. Benedict particularly noted how the apostle was key for the birth of Christianity in what would later become Europe.

"[In Troas] another important event took place: in a dream he saw a Macedonian from the other side of the sea, namely in Europe, who said, 'Come and help us,'" the Pontiff recounted. "It was the future Europe that requested the help and light of the Gospel."

Benedict said he would return in later catecheses to Paul's martyrdom. "For now," he said, "in this brief account of Paul's journeys, suffice it to take into account how he dedicated himself to the proclamation of the Gospel without sparing his energy, and facing a series of grave trials of which he has left us an account in the Second Letter to the Corinthians."

Benedict continued, "We see a determination that is explained only by a soul truly fascinated by the light of the Gospel, enamored of Christ, a soul sustained by a profound conviction: that it is necessary to take the light of Christ to the world, to proclaim the Gospel to all. This I think is what stays with us from this brief account of St. Paul's journeys: to see his passion for the Gospel, and thus intuit the grandeur, the beauty, and even more, the deep need that all of us have of the Gospel.

"Let us pray so that the Lord, who made Paul see his light and hear his word, and touched his heart profoundly, make us also see his light, so that our hearts will also be touched by his Word and so that we too will be able to give today's world, which thirsts for it, the light of the Gospel and the truth of Christ."

U.S. Court of Appeals upholds First-Amendment right to distribute religious and pro-life materials

CHICAGO, Ill (Thomas More Society) – An ordinance that regulated the manner in which individuals could distribute religious handbills and other types of printed materials was ruled unconstitutional last month by the .U.S. Court of Appeals in Chicago.

By 2-1 vote, the three-judge panel upheld an earlier decision by U.S. Federal District Judge Michael Reagan, sitting in East St. Louis. Reagan had ruled that the city violated the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution when it prosecuted Donald Horina, a retired teacher and self-described born-again Christian from St. Charles, Missouri. Horina was arrested for distributing pro-life literature and Gospel tracts near the Hope Clinic for Women, an outpatient surgical treatment center that provides abortions, and in other locations in Granite City.

In July 2003, Horina had placed his literature on windshields of cars parked near Hope Clinic, and was cited for violating the city ordinance prohibiting the "indiscriminate" distribution of "cards, circulars, handbills, samples of merchandise or any advertising matter whatsoever on any public street or sidewalk."

Jason Craddock, a Sauk Village, Illinois, lawyer who has worked on many pro-life cases, filed a civil rights suit in response, and won an injunction against the city. The city then adopted a new ordinance with more specific restrictions, which also was found to be an unreasonable restriction on First-Amendment rights.

The city appealed, and the Thomas More Society, based in Chicago, joined with Alliance Defense Fund to help Craddock defend the appeal, lending him aid in briefing as well as financial support.

"This is a great victory for free speech and we are proud to be a part of it," said Tom Brejcha, president and chief counsel at Thomas More Society. "We congratulate Jason Craddock on his hard work to protect our fundamental rights."

Student in India attacked over gospel tract

MAHARASHTRA, INDIA (ANS) – Sohan didn't know what to expect when the man asked him to wait for just a minute. Sohan, a third year student at a Gospel for Asia Bible college, was handing out Gospel tracts in a city in Maharashtra. One man who received a tract asked Sohan to stay put until he got back.

What Sohan didn't realize was that he had given a Gospel tract to the leader of a powerful anti-Christian extremist group. The extremist leader asked Sohan to wait so he could get others from his group to help him attack this missionary in training.

Sohan thought nothing of the request. It was not unusual for people to bring their friends to hear the message preached by the missionaries. And Sohan was excited because many of the people who received tracts during this summertime outreach had already opened their heart to the Gospel message.

But the extremists had other plans. When they got back to Sohan, they slapped him and dragged him to the local police station, where he was charged with forcing people to convert to Christianity.

The police let Sohan go but required that he return each month for questioning. And while Sohan did have to appear once in court for more questioning, as he answered the questions honestly, the judge realized his innocence – and in an unusual move dropped all charges against him.

Soon Sohan will be sent to his first ministry assignment. "Because of his experience during a summer outreach, he will be better equipped to stand strong for God in spite of the difficult circumstances," say his mentors at Gospel for Asia.

India: Orissa's Christians flee genocidal violence

ORISSA, India (Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin) – In 1969 a Hindu named Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati established an Ashram (Hindu religious centre) in the Kandhamal district of the Orissa state (northeastern India) and committed himself to countering the work of Christian missionaries.

Saraswati, a Hindutva (Hindu nationalist), never succeeded in stopping conversions to Christianity. But with state government support he has turned Orissa into a tinderbox of communal tension. As Hindutva-isation has advanced, especially since 2005, Hindutva zealotry and anti-Christian hatred have escalated, priming whole communities for genocide.

In December 2007 Swami Saraswati organized and incited an anti-Christian Hindu pogrom in Kandhamal that left a swathe of destruction and many thousands of Christians displaced. He urged the Hindus of Kandhamal via mobile phone messaging to burn the homes and churches of Christians and repeat the "revolution" that brought "peace" to Gujarat (referring to the 2002 Hindu pogrom that left some 2000 Muslims dead).

Christians blamed

Two weeks ago Saraswati was ambushed and shot dead. From the evidence this was a targeted assassination perpetrated by a group of well-armed Maoist guerrillas who, as egalitarian left-wingers, are natural enemies of the caste-perpetuating, right-wing Hindu nationalists. Despite this, Hindu leaders in Orissa publicly charged the Christian community with killing the Swami because of his anti-conversion campaign. A violent Hindu pogrom erupted, so far claiming at least 36 lives.

Numerous Christians have been burnt, beaten, raped and slashed with swords. In Kandhamal alone some 13,000 Christians are living in refuges and tent camps. The violence has spread into surrounding districts and 50,000 Christians are estimated to have fled their homes ahead of violent religious cleansing and are now displaced across Orissa, with many hiding in dense jungle.

On August 29 over 40,000 Christian educational institutions throughout India closed in a nationwide protest against the anti-Christian violence. These schools are now facing a backlash, particularly in BJP-ruled states like Karnartaka, where the state government has ordered officials to take action against the schools for closing without government permission.

Observers have been shocked by the level of violence. A 20-year-old nun was burned alive in an orphanage. Another young nun was gang-raped. A senior priest and nun were stripped and violently degraded before a crowd of cheering spectators, including known local government officials and several police. Hundreds of churches have been vandalized, looted and torched as have thousands of Christian homes.

Archbishop Raphael Cheenath has petitioned the Supreme Court for a Central Bureau of Investigation probe into the violence and the state's failure to maintain law and order. Indian Christians are begging Christians around the world to pray for the violence to end and for God to protect and preserve his people.

New Westminister Anglican diocese moves to seize control of independent parishes

VANCOUVER– On August 26, 2008, the Anglican Diocese of New Westminster informed two churches – St. Matthew's in Abbotsford and St. Matthias and St. Luke's in Vancouver that the bishop had dismissed their parish wardens and trustees, who had been elected by those congregations, and appointed new wardens who are more "loyal" to the bishop. According to the diocese's press release, these actions were taken to regain "control of the parishes," which includes control of the properties and buildings.

Being distressed by what they believe are the biblically unorthodox teachings and devaluing of Scripture and traditional Anglican theology of their own bishop and other leaders in the Anglican Church of Canada, both parishes voted in February this year to realign with the Anglican Network in Canada (AniC). In doing so they put themselves under the Episcopal authority of Bishop Donald Harvey and the jurisdiction of the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone – one of the 38 Provinces in the global Anglican Communion. The Anglican Church of Canada is also one of these 38 Provinces.

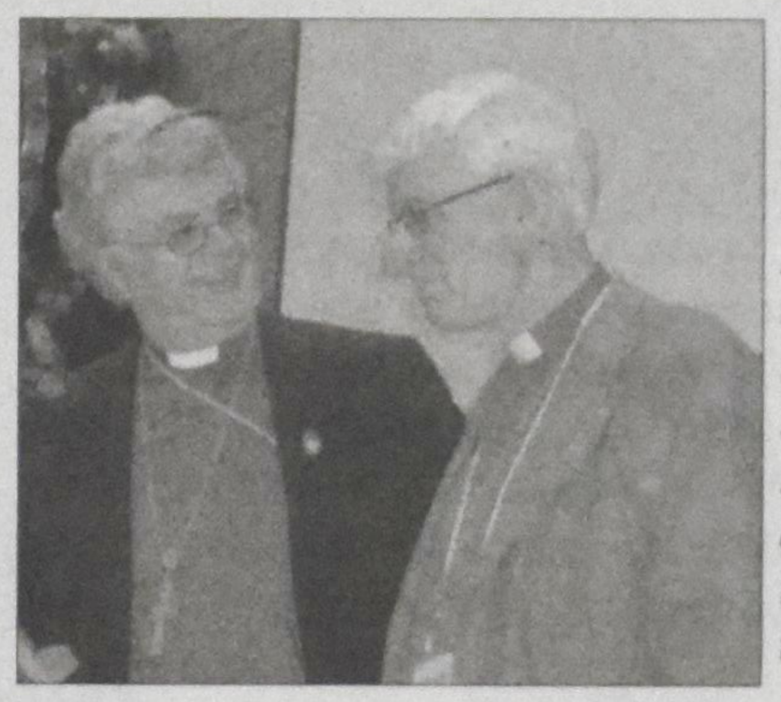
"Whether the Diocese of New Westminster has the right to unilaterally replace these duly elected trustees and move to seize control of the parishes' assets is in dispute," says Cheryl Chang, ANiC Chancellor.

The elected trustees of the two parishes believe their parish properties are held in trust for the benefit of the current congregations who have paid for and maintained these properties, and who are upholding traditional Anglican ministry in accordance with the founding principles of the Anglican Church of Canada (contained in the Solemn Declaration 1893), and the current doctrine of the global Anglican Communion.

The Diocese of New Westminster, which has acted unilaterally and contrary to those principles, asserts the property is held in trust for the diocese. Various actions are currently in the Canadian courts to determine who is the rightful beneficiary of such trusts in light of the growing divisions in the global Anglican Communion.

'In serious theological dispute'

"The trustees of both St Matthew's and St. Matthias and St. Luke are meeting and seeking legal advice regarding their response to the Diocese," Cheryl Chang added. "However, we note with interest that the diocese has chosen to act only against the two smaller parishes and not the larger ANiC parishes, St. John's (Shaughnessy) and Church of the Good Shepherd in Vancouver. Another concern is that the notice alleging a 'crisis' was signed by the bishop on July 10th, but not served on the parishes for six weeks, after the Lambeth Conference had concluded."



Two retired bishops, the Rt. Rev. Don Harvey of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador (left) and the Rt. Rev. Malcolm Harding of Brandon (right), have relinquished their licences to exercise ministry in the ACC and have been accepted as active bishops in the Southern Cone under Venables

The four congregations have been "in serious theological dispute" with the Diocese of New Westminster since June 2002 when the diocese unilaterally proceeded with same-sex blessings, in defiance of leaders of the Anglican Communion and the beliefs of the overwhelming majority of the Anglicans worldwide that such action is contrary to Scripture.

Since 2003, the Primates of the Anglican Communion have repeatedly asked the Anglican Church of Canada and the Diocese of New Westminster to return to biblically faithful Anglican practice and teaching and to provide adequate episcopal oversight for dissenting parishes, but that has not occurred.

Members of the Anglican Network in Canada state that they are "committed to remaining faithful to Holy Scripture and established Anglican doctrine, and to ensuring that orthodox Canadian Anglicans are able to remain in full communion with their Anglican brothers and sisters around the world."

Since it launched its ecclesial structure last November under the jurisdiction of the Anglican Province of the Southern Cone, ANiC has received two bishops – Donald Harvey and Malcolm Harding – and 18 parishes.

Resources

Flowers & Thistles
Curt Gesch

The art of the scrounge: A passion for pallets

Even if you don't own a forklift, old pallets can come in handy.

I think I first discovered pallets when working in a vegetable-canning factory. The peas were grown in local fields, then cut into windrows, combined, trucked to the factory, put into cans, cooked, and put into boxes and then piled on pallets which a forklift stacked in huge towers. I must admit I was much more impressed by the forklift than the pallets.

My job was working on something called a de-palletizer. Empty cans came in layers on pallets and I used a long T-shaped device to slide them off, layer by layer, onto a moving belt line that led to the filler.

Later, the company bought a device of near-mythic complexity: a palletizer. I oversaw the distribution of filled, cooked cans of peas onto a sort of table after which I pushed a button which moved a huge electromagnet over the layer of cans; the magnet lifted a whole layer, picked them up, moved them over a piece of cardboard which was stacked on a pallet, lowered them, released them, and returned for another layer.

I remember that job well. The pallet only had to sit there. The sheets of cardboard separating the layers were easy to put into place. The buttons were easy to push. The Device of Near-Mythic Complexity, however, proved to be more like a Device of Near-Demonic Activity. It would work for two or three layers, then decided to drop a layer of cans, which tumbled six feet to the floor, causing dents in the cans, danger for the warehouse-men, befuddlement for sixteen-year-old operators, and a stoppage to the whole assembly line.

"Boxer!!!!" we would yell, and the supposedly antiquated boxing machine would take over while mechanics, company supervisors, manufacturing representatives, and teen-aged wonder-workers tried to figure out what went wrong. I learned a few new cuss-words that summer. (By the way, that new Device also magnized the company president's then state-of-the-art Swiss watch.)

With the Device or the old, reliable Boxer, however, the wooden pallets continued their humble service with stoicism and, perhaps, the occasional ironic chuckle.

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Wooden pallets are still with us. They are made of rejected wood: twisted elm, basswood, deformed oak. And pallets – whole or broken – keep piling up wherever freight is moved or stored. In the old days at the canning factory, we were occasionally assigned the job of repairing pallets. No more. Now they are shipped off to a landfill, burned, buried, or shredded – nails and all.

The Canadian Tire store in Smithers, B.C., sometimes piles broken pallets in its parking lot under a sign: "FREE WOOD." This probably doesn't happen, however, in the Rosedale district of Toronto or Grosse Point, Michigan. (If, indeed, a big box store is allowed in those sorts of places.)

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I am a collector of broken pallets. If I see a pile of pallets in a local retail or industrial yard, I ask, "Do you have to take those to the dump?" Or, "Do you pay a tipping fee to get rid of those broken pallets?" Either way, I mention that I live half-way between Smithers and the sanitary landfill and would be happy to have fifteen or thirty pallets dumped in my driveway.

Getting the pallets delivered free warms the cockles of my cheap heart. Then, of course, comes a little work. First is the inspection. Which pallets look like they might have a few good boards in them? Once I got some free pallets made with red oak. It was worth the trouble to take those twist nails out for the sake of some good boards. Another time I found the boards were planed pine 1 X 6's. At the cost of labour, it made for some pretty nice wood.

Most of the time, however, the wood is – as I said above – wood from "reject trees." These pallets still find many uses.

The simplest is as fuel for an outdoor fire. Our neighbour gives a farm picnic once a year and uses old pallets from his store for fuel. (By the way, the building of community and the intimacy of fire are usually not considered when thinking about CO_2 emissions.)

I cut other pallets into small "chunks", just right for small quick, hot fires in October or April.

Pallets make great emergency gates on the farm.

Pallets also are wonderful bases for piles of firewood, keeping wood off the ground and letting air circulate underneath to speed drying.

Four pallets and a little wire make good compost boxes. I can put one together in about ten minutes. The spacing of wood allows air into the compost as well as wire does. It's easy to remove the front of a pallet composter for unloading and when the pallets begin to decay, let them dry out and you have more firewood. I suppose if you live in the city you might have to disguise the fact that your box is actually made of a bio-degradable, recyclable product like wood, but I'm sure there is a boutique somewhere that sells flower decals (recyclable, made in China) for the purpose. Otherwise, you can hide your pallet composter between bushes.

My wife found an ingenious use for pallets in our chicken runs. As noted in an earlier column, we have three outside runs for our laying chickens, providing them with rotational grazing with near-continuous greenery. It always seems that the chickens decide to choose one of the runs to scratch away until they have reduced the greenery to bare soil, necessitating re-seeding. Betsey's solution? Put pallets on the ground on two-thirds of each run. This enables the chickens to peck between the slats but not scratch the grass, clover, or delicious weeds out of the ground. That allows 1/3 of each run to be the scratching and dusting ground and 2/3 the source of greens.

Finally, pallets make good walkways. In the past I've placed one on the asphalt over a puddle that always seems to form just where children get off the bus at a local school. Sometimes I put a pallet over the gravel driveway just in front of our door during spring thaw.

Confronted by clay just where I needed a walkway to our new guesthouse, I used pallets to make a boardwalk. "The Drifters" couldn't have asked for more.

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Used pallets have lots of uses. With a little effort, they can provide useful service, lengthening their life-spans. But they do have a cost: time. One has to have time to do things with them. Time that could be spent making money, to pay for natural gas, buying a plastic composter, paying a landscaper to make a path, or buying for free-range eggs. For me, the choice is easy. For others who don't have the freedom to do some of the things I do here in the boonies, there may be other ways of scrounging used materials to be better stewards and provide alternative uses of your time. I would love to hear your ideas. So would Rick DeGraaf, *Christian Courier* stewardship columnist.

This article finished, I think I'm going to go outside, walk the boardwalk to the guest house, collecting no miry clay on my shoes, thanks to used wood pallets.

Curt Gesch is a retired school teacher who will un-retire in the fall, the Lord willing.

The comforter who will restore my soul

This is why I weep
and my eyes overflow with tears.
No one is near to comfort me,
no one to restore my spirit.
My children are destitute
because the enemy has prevailed.
Lamentation 1:16

"This is why I weep!", the prophet declares, "My eyes overflow with tears, because the Comforter, who would restore my spirit is not near".

Do you know such weeping?

Many tears are shed every day, and even in the night. Our heart longs for many things, hopes for many things, clings to many things. When our hopes are not fulfilled, or our treasures are taken away from us, we sense an enormous emptiness and disappointment in our hearts.

We really grieve. Then our hearts are heavy and our eyes overflow. A good cry can sometimes bring relief, while suppressed grief only aggravates our sorrow.

A child cries easier because it is more sensitive. That is the very reason why children tend to be happier. As the tears run down their cheeks, the sadness evaporates. As adults we carry our grief around with us, and it buries itself within our hearts. We seek relief not through the tear ducts of our eyes but in the depth of our soul. That's why our grief is more intense and prolonged.

Those who cry may receive sympathy, but those who bottle up their grief receive no consolation.

But when you are able to cry, what do your tears mean?

The Lord answers that question when he tells you, "Wherefore does a man grieve? For the punishment of his sins." [Cf. Lamentations 3:39].

Do you know such sorrow? Do you grieve over your sins? Is your soul overcome because of the sins in your life? Do they overwhelm you? Do you know what the Psalmist meant when he cried out in terror, because of the sins which brought him close to death? [Psalm 88:16]

Sad to say, we usually prefer to ignore such questions assuming that the sorrow which overwhelms us is something foreign to us.

Of course, we readily acknowledge our guilt, and confess our sins. After all, who would say that his hands are clean? But let us remove those blinders. Let us speak the truth, and admit that we usually acknowledge a sense of guilt as a matter of duty, not out of real self awareness. Generally speaking, when all is well, we hardly recognize our sinfulness, except of course right after a specific transgression or when we have fallen into a particular sin.

Therefore if a time should come when you are truly aware of that sinfulness, and you are wasting away in remorse of soul, what other explanation could you give, except that the Holy Spirit graciously worked this in your heart? For the Holy Spirit can teach you, captivate you and make you uneasy with your self. That same Spirit gives you insight into your own heart and thoughts, your past, your birth, and your ancestry, all the way back to Adam. When that happens your soul will be moved, and you will cry out for mercy and forgiveness from your God.

Without such moments of discovery and preparatory grace, your heart is so hard, lethargic and insensitive, that it can dance and frolic even though your soul is dead. It would sooner laugh at your own folly, than weep with sorrow at your inner decay.

Yet, there is another kind of weeping of which the prophet speaks, "This is why I weep, and my eyes overflow with tears. No one is near to comfort me" [Lamentations 1:16]. This sorrow is not like the flood of tears we cry when we recognize our total depravity which brings renewal. That brings light into the darkness of our innermost soul. It means seeing and enjoying heavenly things. Soothing oil is poured out for our wounded soul, sores are cleansed, medicine is given for our pain; and comfort comes from our God.

But what happened now? That comforter has disappeared again. The wound of Jeremiah's heart is throbbing again, and the hope he had placed on the Lord his God has faded away. Now he is even more desperate than he was before, because the grace once tasted, has escaped him. He enjoyed relief and comfort, but his soul is now once more left in its grief.

"Will the Lord reject us forever? Will he never show his favor again?" [Dutch Psalter 77:6] Was God's salvation only temporary, to leave him in greater sorrow than before? A momentary ray of light making the renewed darkness of his soul all the more oppressive?

That's how the soul sinks into despair. Not right away, for he does not immediately note his estrangement from God, and appears to lack nothing.

"Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem" by Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn.

But as the end of that period of abandonment approaches, and the Lord is about to awaken his soul, then also the sorrow and pain come back to him; and when the Comforter returns an unspeakable grief finally alerts him to the absence of the Comforter.

Please note, that the Comforter had comforted him with delightful *promises*, but he was incapable of acting on them by himself. The Comforter did not say, as a human comforter might have said, "But you must, anyway; just try a little harder". No the divine Comforter whispered in his soul, "Dear child, I know that you can't do it. But I have a solution. You can do it through my power. Come to me and I shall work in you both the will and the accomplishment."

That was manna for the soul and water for those who thirst. The *promise* is precious, because the comforter did not demand this of our empty hearts. He promised that he himself would fill our hearts with the power needed to respond faithfully.

Now the Law is no longer an accuser who would nail us to the cross, but a guide to the beautiful paths in which the Spirit leads us.

And this is the source of true prayer from the heart.

Prayer, not for wealth and prosperity, but for the fulfillment of the *promise*.

Every morning and every evening we should beg to receive from the Lord according to his promise, that he will work in us both the desire and the accomplishment to walk according to the ways he has prepared for us. Then comes a sacred Joy! When God fulfils his promises to us, we may give thanks for his faithfulness.

We experience true comfort when the Holy Spirit comforts us and relieves us of our wicked heart, our evil nature, our helplessness and shameless lack of holiness.

However, all too soon this comfort becomes a habit. God's gifts are so abundantly generous and kind, that we soon forgot our hunger and thirst, and with them also our desire for sincere supplication and true prayer.

Sincere prayer for grace morning and evening, can turn into a habitual request like asking a table host to pass the roast beef. In response the Lord rations the grace he bestowed on us.

He does not forsake us, but he leads us into a wasteland with a muddied brook. His promises no longer pour their grace on us. It is at most a light drizzle.

That's how the Lord removes the shallowness of our soul, and hunger and thirst return. Then we cry out because 'the Comforter is far from us', and with such a cry the Comforter returns to us. For he was never far from us.

He just *seemed* far off because our eyes were blurred with sin.

Note: *This is part of a series of meditations by Abraham Kuyper translated by Jack van Meggelen.*

Corinthians

God is more than Christ

For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:27

The kingdom of God has been established on earth in the form of the kingdom of Christ through his sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection. Jesus the Christ has been appointed and made to be Lord of all things.

Conversely, all things are therefore destined by God to be subject to his gracious rule. This means that nothing and no one can be saved except through Christ. There is but one way under heaven by which we can be saved.

This is true first of all for human beings. But it is also true of the powers and all things. Nothing happens in all of space and time that doesn't have its existence and meaning in Jesus Christ and in his completed work and rule.

This is true not just of salvation and of being saved. At the very least it is also true of our sanctification. All things are subject to Christ: this means, among other things, that they must all be christianized. They must carry the stamp, the image, the form of Christ. All things and all humanity must be liberated from the schema and the form of our contemporary heathen world and be transformed into the image of him who has been appointed to be their Lord.

This is true of the deepest emotions of our hearts, but it is also true of the most superficial of our relationships to our fellows. Both the inward and outward parts of our lives must begin to carry the form of Christ.

This is true not for each of us as individuals, in our personal lives, but also for us on the communal level; that is, also the things of culture, business and the state are subject to Christ. They have their existence and meaning in him and must also be stamped with his image. The redemption of life is not possible in any other way, nor can human existence be made liveable in any other way.

Nevertheless, Paul does see a limit to Christ's all-embracing rule. With some emphasis he remarks that when we speak of all things being subject to Christ, there is of course One who has put all things under his feet. And this One is naturally not subject. It is he who has performed this subjection; it is an act, an event. He is not subject.

This emphasis of Paul is remarkable. God the Father is not subject to Christ. God is not "saved" by Christ's completed work. Nor is God sanctified. He is not below Christ. It is he who has put everything under his rule. This means that he stands above Christ. So there is something higher than Jesus Christ, than God the Son in human flesh. And that is God himself.

This is the depth to which we must plumb Paul's teachings. For our total salvation we are wholly bound to Jesus Christ. In him are wrapped all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He is our righteousness, holiness and redemption. But we may only be bound to Jesus and find all salvation in him in such a way that in and through him and the work he has accomplished we find God himself.

God is not exhausted in Christ and in his work of redemption, such as have been accomplished in the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection. The work of redemption is Messianic work. Without doubt Jesus Christ is God himself, namely God the Son. But he is God the Son in human flesh. He took our flesh upon himself and he did so to take upon himself the work that God wanted done. He became the Messiah, and the Messiah fulfills an office before the face of God.

The Trinity (The Throne of Grace) *Albrecht Durer (1471-1528 German) Woodcut, 1511*

This messianic work of redemption is, however, not the abc or xyz the only and the all of what God does. The Lord God does more. Besides the work of redemption there is also the work of creation and the work of glorification. Now everything related to creation is subject to Christ. And all of the work of glorification rests on the work of redemption. But this doesn't mean that they all merge into one. Jesus Christ does not stand at the beginning nor at the end. He stands in the middle. It is here that God has subjected all things to him. But God himself is not part of this subjection.

These reflections have huge meaning for our sense of life and for our experience of this world's reality. God is not wholly contained in Jesus Christ. The work of redemption is not his sole work. God is not purely the same as saving grace. God is broader, deeper. God has another side. There is also an abyss in him.

Therefore life is much deeper than can be expressed in terms of being saved by Christ. The fact that I'm a sinner and that I have been forgiven is an unprecedentedly great matter. But the fact that I am here is something else. It is not the work of redemption but of creation. I have been called into existence, from nothing. I have been put here with all of the worldly reality purely out of God's good will. And I have also been given a purpose, and this purpose is not in Christ and his grace but in the kingdom of glory and joy.

Without Christ and christian culture, without church and the christian faith, we cannot see these original and ultimate conditions of our lives, nor understand them and hold fast to them. So the gospel and the christianization of life are wholly necessary. But we must not think that we exist because we are in Christ and have christianized all of life. For God's original and ultimate purpose is not christianization, but life; not the mediator, but mankind; not Christ, but us.

Therefore we should not lock ourselves up in the work of redemption and whatever is related to that. That does give us an enormous sense of security. But in the long run we are then in danger of becoming purely christian middle-class citizens.

Existence is much broader and much deeper. There must always remain an abyss in God, for he is unfathomable – and this is his greatest glory. In Christ he is boundlessly gracious. But in himself, in his eternal council, he elects and rejects. We suffer under predestination, but that is unavoidable. We will never wholly surmount it through the gospel of Christ.

We are only healed of it to a certain extent when in our deepest inwardness we become united with God through the spirit and we willingly surrender to God in his unfathomable and free power. We only fully surmount it when we become aware not just of God's grace and free power, but if we also keep them within the broad relationships in which they stand, namely creation and the kingdom of glory.

Translated by Harry der Nederlanden

Everyday living

Eating my words

Angela Bick

Take a weed to lunch

A dull, dusty book on the Salvation Army's crowded shelves caught my eye earlier this summer. It had the rather old-fashioned title of *Putting Food By*, the sort of phrase that second-language learners stumble over. "Putting by" simply means to save, and this book (from 1973) is a thorough reference work on the best ways to can, freeze, pickle, dry, cure and preserve various fruits and vegetables. Last autumn, my CC article wondered whether the art of canning has, so to speak, been preserved. A number of readers sent emphatic emails, saying "Yes! It has. Here's how." These are two of the stories I was delighted to receive.

"We moved into a neighbourhood on the other side of Main (west) from Westdale, almost two years ago now. The neighbourhood is a real mix of student houses, Jewish families (because of the Hebrew school), and older people who have lived here for thirty years or more. Last year, my husband Andy and Steffen, our son, noticed a pear tree laden with almost-ripe fruit in someone's front yard. They knocked on the door to see if the owners were planning to use the fruit, and were told to help themselves. And so we canned pears last summer. When the kids were younger, we used to put away many jars of tomatoes, applesauce, peaches, pears and jam, but we stopped once the kids moved out. Recently our youngest, Ilse, started to make noises in the fall about canning fruit, so when she was home for a year, we actually hauled out the old canner and put up a bushel of peaches with her.

Well this year, in early summer, Andy came home with a report of a cherry tree loaded with fruit in front of a student house (empty for the summer). We tried to locate the owners, and one day noticed a car in the drive. We were once again told to help ourselves. Our neighbour, daughter and Andy did, until we had cherries "coming out of our ears." They couldn't stop picking, and so late into the night we were popping the pits and canning cherries. Now, when our children are home in the late summer or early fall, they are the ones who talk about getting some fruit to can."

– Agnes Kramer-Hamstra
Hamilton, Ontario

"Thirty years ago, I was – besides doing journalism – canning hundreds of jars each year for the family table. Many of my neighbours were doing the same, everything from jams and jellies to pickles, relish, vegetables, and fruit in syrup. I suppose there's less canning happening now, but it's not a lost art in rural Nova Scotia by any means. This year I canned maybe eighty or ninety litres of slow-simmered tomato sauce, for instance. Last year I did that, plus jams, cucumber pickles and beet pickles. Didn't do many jams this year, just a few dozen jars for gifts. I still had lots of tomato juice left from last year, so didn't make that either. It's surprising how busy a person can be when "retired"; the only true part of that word is often "tired."

There's a solid movement here, evident at the Halifax market, towards locally produced food. This is helped along by some of the city's top chefs, who buy at the market. Customers are buying black and red currants, gooseberries, Concord grapes, and so on. Twenty years ago these were hard to sell in any volume; now farmers are actually planting more. People are eating kale in salads and stir-fries; twenty years ago it was almost exclusively a traditional Dutch vegetable. I think we'll see a renewed interest in canning and freezing, since it's the most reliable way to eat local food all year long. I have two fifteen cubic feet freezers, so full at present that I'll have trouble finding a couple of holes for the applesauce I made this afternoon."

– Anne van Arragon Hutten
Jubilee Mountain, Nova Scotia

One of my favourite books from CBC radio's "Canada Reads" selections is *Stanley Park* by Timothy Taylor. In this novel, young chef Jeremy Papier opens a small bistro in Vancouver that serves local food. Meanwhile, his father – an eccentric anthropologist – moves into Stanley Park to discover how the park's homeless population feeds itself. Like George Orwell in *Down and Out in Paris and London*, Papier Senior gets thoroughly into character. One fantastic scene describes the two Papiers attempting to capture and kill a duck. When Jeremy's business does poorly, he is forced to sell it to a man named Dante, the owner of Starbucks' fictional equivalent. Dante funds the restaurant's refurbishment, but its opening night is Jeremy's triumph. He makes use (spoiler alert) of Stanley Park's bounty for the new menu, successfully passing off raccoon and squirrel as foreign delicacies to international food critics. If there's a common thread in these three stories, it's that you don't have to be a farmer to harvest something. In suburbia, we can pick those pears that the pear-tree owners ignore; we can pluck our ornamental kale and gather fallen apples. There's a Biblical precedent for gleaning, of course; Ruth does it, and she finds much more than barley and wheat. I might not be ready to bag a Canadian goose for dinner, not quite yet, but I like the idea of putting found food by. It's been a plentiful summer, filled with an abundance of rain and the joy of growing things. I'm going to be there when the harvesting begins.

Red Pepper and Peach Chutney

1 hot red pepper (diced)
5 large red peppers (diced)
12 firm peaches (diced)
¾ cup white wine vinegar
½ tsp sea salt
¼ cup lemon juice

Place in a large pot, allow to simmer gently for ½ hour. Stir frequently to prevent sticking.

2 ½ cups sugar
Cayenne pepper to taste

Add sugar and spice. Simmer another ½ hour until thick.

Ladle into sterilized jars and process in hot water bath for 15 minutes (if you're short on time, storage in freezer bags also works well).

Late fall variation: replace the peaches with apples. Pears can also be used if they are firm enough to hold their shape after cooking.

Chutney (meaning "hot" in Indian) is delicious over rice and with hot or cold meats – especially chicken.

Angela Bick will be taking a three-month break from the CC. She still welcomes your recipes and stories connecting social justice, food, and simple living at al_angbick@hotmail.com

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Reflections

Welcome to my perch

Bert Witvoet

An unforgettable Olympic moment

You can't get a clearer picture of what it means to live in a totalitarian country like China than by reading that a senior member of the Communist Party decided that Yang Peiyi, a young girl with a voice as pure as water, should be shoved aside. She was going to sing the Chinese anthem Ode to the Motherland during the Opening Ceremony of the 2008 Olympics. But, according to the official, she did not have an appealing face and should not be seen doing the singing. The fact that Yang Peiyi had a chubby face and somewhat uneven teeth apparently disqualified her. Her voice was given the green light, but her body was replaced by that of a lip-synching "beauty" called Lin Miaoke.

When the ruse was discovered, officials hastened to explain that both girls felt honoured to be able to serve their country, one with her voice, the other with her looks. It was a perfectly fine way of making the ceremony as attractive as possible. No one was hurt. Everybody was happy! If you don't believe that, just ask a high official of the Communist Party.

What a farce!

It was also a cruel form of discrimination against those who do not have the physical credentials for meeting the Communist Party's standards of beauty. I took a look at the picture of Yang Peiyi and concluded that she is attractive enough for me – an open smile, an innocent face, no visible blemishes. Not that my standards of beauty need to be met either. Who cares what the girl looks like? Every person by virtue of being human has a stamp of approval from the Creator on her. And enjoyment of the musical part of the ceremony has to do with the quality of singing, doesn't it?

There are a number of things wrong here. First of all, why should an ideologue overrule the people who were in charge of putting on the Opening Ceremony?

Yang Peiyi

Lin Miaoke

Why should a sport event reflect the political agenda of the (non-elected) ruling party? Why does the status of an important and rich country like China depend on the looks of a singer? Why is a bureaucrat allowed to play with the life of a young girl by deeming her ugly? Actually, he played with the lives of both girls. I have an idea that Lin Miaoke was not privy to the arrangement and that she was fully convinced that it was her voice that charmed the worldwide audience. There's no way that the Communist Party took her into their confidence. Imagine what she will feel like years later when she finds out what happened! The whole scenario lacks integrity, honesty, justice and compassion.

Tip of the iceberg

Why should anyone be surprised? There is a much darker side to Communism. If we could take a look in the prisons and listen to the stories of those wrongfully incarcerated and tortured, we would know a little better what lies behind the façade of the people's republic. We know enough about the persecution of Christians, members of the Falung Gong, and critics of the regime to realize the outlines of the monster that lurks in the hidden depths of the Middle Kingdom. China has 1,200 known forced labour camps, which have imprisoned up to 7 million enemies of the state. According to dissident Harry Wu, who was a political prisoner for two decades but now lives in the U.S., the government probably executes between 8,000 and 10,000 prisoners each year. It is estimated that 95 percent of the organ trade comes from executed prisoners. All of this is covered up by the big Lie.

As such, the incident of one girl gathering the applause at the expense of another, merely highlights the character of a corrupt regime. It is the tiny chip on the small tip of the larger top of the greater cap of the momentous iceberg called totalitarianism: a regime that lays claim to having the final say over the totality of human life and society in China. It's a freedom-sucking power vacuum machine that will completely disregard the well-being of the individual if it stands in the way of the erroneously calculated "well-being" of the collective. It is the modern version of the Tower of Babel.

You would think that history has taught humanity a lesson about the ultimate failure of such wrong-headed ideologies. Apparently not.

Bert Witvoet is the former editor of CC, now retired, who stays active by editing the Christian Educators Journal and preaching the occasional sermon. He tries to stay informed by hearing and reading the daily news and Reformed by looking for writers and speakers who can tell the forest from the trees.

Why I enjoy dance

Jeanette Wieringa

For as long as I can remember I've loved dance. I always love the way my definition and style of dancing changes depending on how I'm feeling. But it's something I can always fall back on for familiarity.

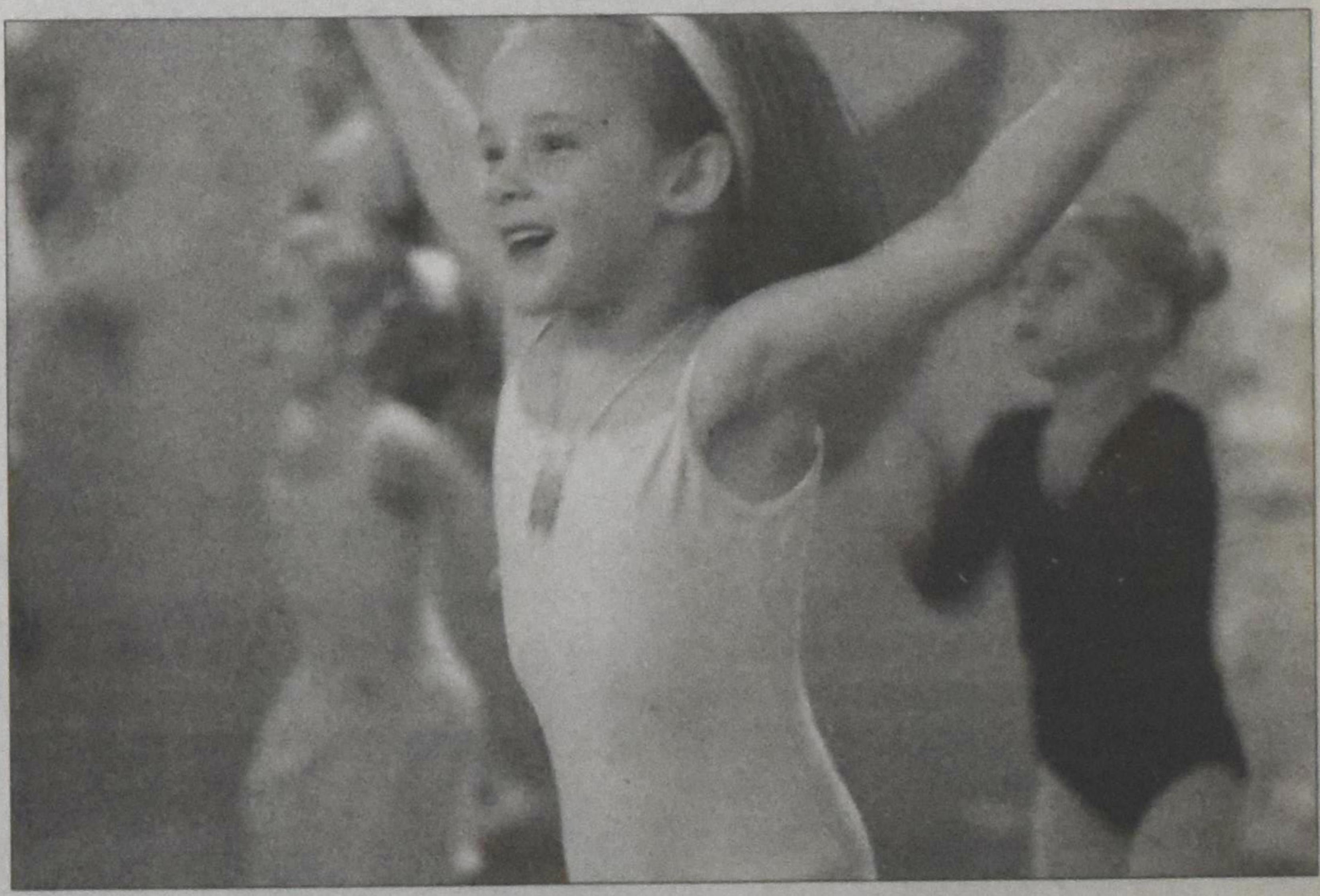
I need to move! I have ever since I was little. I would always fidget and bounce all over the place. My mom finally took me to a dance class and it just clicked. I love music and I love movement. To put the two together only made sense. I think I like the way my body responds to the music. I like the way the music and I compliment each other, whatever we do. It feels like I'm floating, nothing else really matters to me, and, everyone else becomes caught in the moment with me. The fun thing about dance is that my body is like a piece of art that moves. With control I can sculpt and create a masterpiece.

I love to perform on stage. I love dancing when the curtain rises and I hold the secret to what happens next. This is the one time when people actually pay to see me show off. I even love the anticipation; waiting for the climax on stage. I like getting off the stage and hearing people say "good job."

Of course I don't dance just to be on stage, I enjoy dance because It's a language for me. I can display how the music makes me feel better than words ever could. I can get swept off to my own little world and when the dance is done you will know exactly where that is. It's not something you can explain, it's not something tangible, it's just the way it works. Dance gives me a freedom to say what I want to say without saying anything at all.

I love how it's a challenge. Something that I will always have more to improve on. I like to push myself. I like to watch myself get better at dancing. And over my seven years of dancing, I have become better.

My last point may be hard for you to understand. But it's how I worship God. You see you may not know it, but God made us to worship him. You may think this selfish but if you painted a picture wouldn't you want to be recognized for it, instead of the picture recognized for itself? Same with God. So we are most happy doing what we were designed to do, whether you like it or not. Well that's the way it works for me. I love to dance, because when I do, God is right there. It has a deeper meaning for me. Sure I like dance for the fact that I'm good at it, dance keeps me in shape and gives my energy a place to go, but really it all comes down to God. I don't need to be the best, I just need to give it my best.



Jeanette is 14 years old. She wrote this essay for her grade 9 English class.

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Classifieds

Birthday

We are thankful to God for the **95th Birthday** on September 23, 2008. D.V. of

Maria Dam

She is the dear mother of:
Joan and Jack Buwalda
Alida and Cor VanderKruk
Rene and Anne Dam
Christine and Andrew Schaafsma
Mieke and Harold Groen.

She is also loved by her 29 grandchildren and 56 great-grandchildren.

Join us as we celebrate with her on Saturday, Sept. 27, 2008 with an **Open House** from 2 - 4 p.m. at the Flamborough C.R.C. corner of Middletown Rd. and Hwy 8 in Dundas, Ontario L9H 5E1

Her address: 279 Hwy 8 RR 1, Dundas ON L9H 5E1

Anniversaries

1948 October 7 2008

If Your presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here.
Exodus 33:15

With joy and thanksgiving to God we announce the **60th Anniversary** of

Rev. John and Alice De Pater

Margo and Jack Van Gilst
Matthew & Anne – Mika
Katrina & Steve – Naomi, Petra
Benjamin & Tracy
Luther, Reuben
Bea and Rennie Van Gilst
Stephanie & Tim – Kate, Noah Leah
David & Melissa – Ethan, Gabriel
Tim & Erin, Andrew & Rachel
Dan & Sarah – Haley
Jan and Elizabeth De Pater
Dylan, Dexter, Ava, Nathan
Alice and John Douma
Melissa & Dennis – Dryden, Logan, Colton
Jason & Jenny – Jackson, Jacob
Aaron, Thomas, Miranda
Stephen and Tammy De Pater
Steven, Jennifer
James and Barb De Pater
Alexandria, Madison, Erik

Home address: 113-220 Viewmount Dr. Nepean ON K2E 7M5

With thanksgiving to God

Bob and Mary VanderVennen

celebrate God's goodness for their

55th Wedding Anniversary
September 17, 2008 and
Bob's 80th birthday
October 4, 2008

Children and grandchildren:
Mark & Alice VanderVennen
Robyn, Luke, Rachel
Paul & Judy VanderVennen
Jacqueline, Jason, Shane, Derek
Kathy VanderVennen

Open House Reception
Saturday, September 20, 3-5 p.m.
Delta Toronto East Hotel, Heritage Rm.
Kennedy Road and #401, Scarborough

Address: Suite 1910 - 1 Massey Square Toronto ON M4C 5L4

1958 September 2008

Gerrit and Sandra Smit (nee **Dykstra**)

On September 26, 2008 the Lord willing we hope to celebrate our parents **50th Wedding Anniversary**.
We join with them in thanking our wonderful God for his faithfulness and pray that he will continue to bless them with many more years to come.

We are especially blessed and thankful to God to have Dad with us. Dad for over 13 years has been fighting with Lou Gehrig's (ALS). We have witnessed through Dad's illness the strong love that two people can have for each other.

We wish you God's blessings and hope to celebrate many more years with the both of you. With all our love your children:

Ron & Laurie Smit
Linda & John Zwaagstra
Charlene & Jake den Hollander
Rosalie & Robert Brinkert
Carol & John Ryzebol
Irene & Craig Somers

Also 19 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

Home address: 266 Goose Alley Lane, Goodwood ON L0C 1A0

Obituary

Emmen, Drente
August 29, 1923

Lacombe, AB
August 21, 2008

Alice Kraay (nee Woldhuis)

went to be with her Lord and Saviour.
Predeceased in 2006 by her husband Tjeerd

Lovingly missed by:
Irene Kraay, *Burnaby, BC*
Agnes & Harv Prins, *Lacombe, AB*
Cindy & Steven Siebenga, *Bentley, AB*
Steven & Karlee Prins – Rilyn, *Lacombe, AB*
Keith & Karissa Prins – Isabelle, Anna, *Lacombe, AB*
Brian & Cheryl Prins – John, *Lacombe, AB*
Ed & Linda Kraay, *Lacombe, AB*
Jesse & Shelley Kraay – Olivia, Madelyn, *Edmonton, AB*
Reuben & Rachel Kraay – Melia, Elijah, *Lacombe, AB*
Matt & Willeke Kraay, *Lacombe, AB*
Amanda Kraay, *Victoria, BC*
Janet & Phil Ryskamp, *Calgary, AB*
Michelle & Jason Dewar, *Calgary, AB*
Tim Ryskamp, *Calgary, AB*
Dan Ryskamp, *Calgary, AB*
Wilma & Gord Spelt, *Lacombe, AB*
Randy & Diana Spelt – Paisley, *Bluffton, AB*
Jason Spelt, *Lacombe, AB*
Becky Spelt, *Rocky Mtn. House, AB*

Correspondence: Agnes Prins, RR 3, Lacombe AB T4L 2N3.

Thank you

Thank you to everyone for celebrating our **60th Anniversary** with us. It was wonderful to receive so many cards, visits and congratulations, and very much appreciated. We thank the Lord for giving us 60 wonderful years together.

Henry & Lammie Rumph

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Our current and planned programs include:

Safe Harbour – Our long standing safe meeting place for those wanting to be in a Christ Centred setting. We are thinking of buying to meet our long term goals.

Silver and Gold – A ministry to seniors we started this year. Please pray for the many seniors and this program.

Song Outreach – Singing evenings with groups at local churches started last year.

Street Work – On the street outreach to people who have not heard the good news of Jesus Christ. This has involved mainly fliers.

Bible Studies – Making and teaching of disciples of people interested in the gospel.

Emergency Food Bank – Feeding the hungry

Counseling and Support – Supporting those with broken hearts and lives including children, teens, adults and the elderly by long term listening or by providing support in finding counseling.

24/7 – A program we hope to run full time to send out the gospel in all program areas.

HOPE Centre
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Jeremiah 29:11

Current openings include: Safe Harbour staff (20 sought), Silver and Gold (1 sought), Song Outreach (1 sought), Street work and feeding the hungry (5 sought), Counselling and support (1 professional – Pastor – Social Worker – Physcologist type sought), 24/7 (2 volunteers to get up and running). Other positions in fundraising, media, church partnering, partnering with business and government) are available or need workers. Have skill or talent, want to be used to spread the gospel but have no skills, and want to work? If so, God can use you in the Hope Centre.

Visit our Web site: hopes.face.google pages.com

Contact us at 905-790-2273 or email us at hope316@rogers.com. Ask for Tony Papasidero.

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An information package is available upon request. Information about RCHS is presented at www.rchs.on.ca. Interested applicants may send their résumé, statement of faith, and philosophy of Christian education to **mmudde@primus.ca**.

Application deadline is 31 October 2008.

Classis Chatham of the CRCNA
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Classical Ministry Developer

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Further information may be obtained from
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An information package is available upon request as rockycrc@telus.net.

Mail resume to: **First Rocky Christian Reformed Church**
RR # 3, Site 4, Box 6
Rocky Mountain House, AB T4T 2A3

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Saskatoon is experiencing unprecedented growth and economic opportunities. If you are interested in exploring your family's options in Saskatoon, please email the links below.

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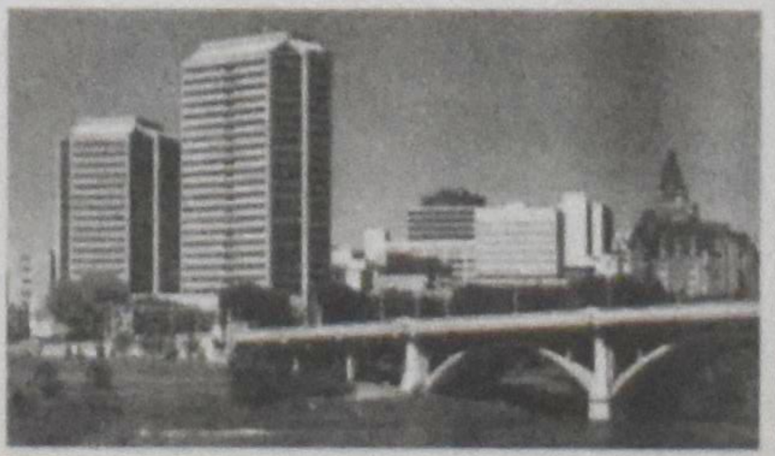
with your contact information and interests.



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Promissory Notes

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For more information regarding investment with Elim Village, contact **Terry-Lynn Dryfhout** at **tld@elimvillage.com** or call **778.996.7755**
Visit our website at **www.ElimVillage.com**

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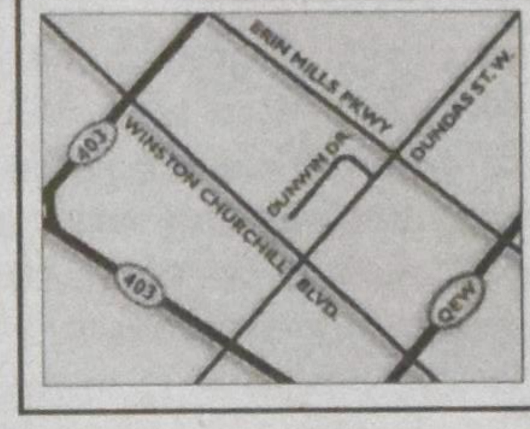

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October 7-8, 2008

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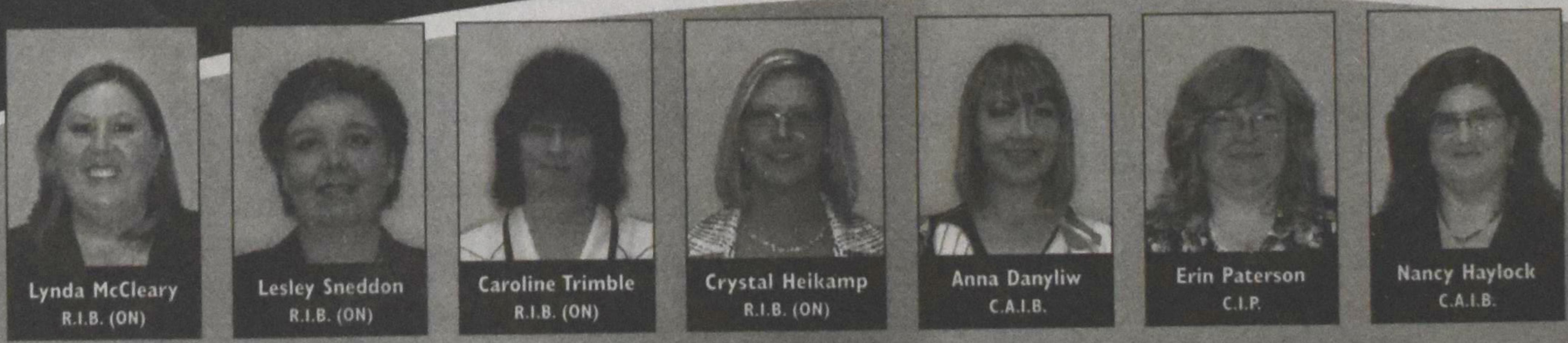

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS - 2008

Sep 20 Celebrate 40 years of The Lighthouse on Saturday at Willowdale Christian School (60 Hilda Ave) in **Willowdale**, ON starting at 5:00 with light refreshments and at 6:30 with a light program. Contact Rob Datema: rob@lighthousecentre.ca or 416-535-6262

Sep 23 Organ recital featuring Stephanie Burgoyne (ARCCO) and William Vandertuin (solo and organ four hands) at St. Paul's Cathedral, **London**, 12 noon. (wvan08@rogers.com)

Sep 27 2008 Worldview Conference at Kings Christian Collegiate, 528 Burnhamthorpe Rd, **Oakville**, Ont. Info and registration at www.icscanada.edu/events.

Oct 4 Get Connected partnership Banquet hosted by CRC campus ministries, Uni. of Guelph & Uni. of Waterloo/Laurier. Banquet 6:30 -9:00 at the Drayton CRC. Contact: Eve Mazereeuw emazereeuw@gmail.com or 519-827-1753 Ad to follow in upcoming issues.

Oct 5 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Henry De-Bolster will be preaching.

Oct 18 Day of Encouragement. An opportunity for all deacons, elders and church members to be encouraged, inspired and equipped for ministry. This event takes place at Hamilton District Christian High in **Ancaster**. Our theme is 'Walking in His Way'. 50 workshops await your registration. The cost is $55.00. Registration flyers and details are available at www.diaconalministries.com or call (905) 336-2920 for more information.

Nov 6 Organ recital featuring Stephanie Burgoyne (ARCCO) and William Vandertuin (solo and organ four hands) at Trinity Anglican Church, **Cambridge**, 12:15 p.m. (wvan08@rogers.com)

Nov 8 Trillium Leaque Reunion (Ontario) If you were involved in Trillium League Youth during the years of 1975 and 1982, you are invited to reminisce & reconnect on Saturday from 4-9 pm at Community Christian Reformed Church in **Kitchener**. For details go to www.trilliumleaguereunion.com or email Phia (Hoogendoorn) Howes at phia@sympatico.ca or call 519-699-5942. See ad this issue.

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Saturday. September. 20. 2008

5:00 p.m. LightRefreshments
6:30-7:30 p.m. Program
At
Willowdale Christian School
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Come and join the celebration of the Lighthouse ministry

For Information:
Janet 416-535-6262
or janet@lighthousecentre.ca

Dutch Service will be held October 5, 2008 in the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Henry DeBolster will be preaching.

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Trillium League Reunion (Ontario)

If you were involved in Trillium League Youth during the years of 1975 (First All Ontario "SowWhat?" Convention) and 1982 (North American "Bloom With Joy" convention) you are invited to reminisce & reconnect on Saturday, November 8, 2008 from 4-9 p.m. We'll share memories, music, photos & food at Community Christian Reformed Church in Kitchener. You won't want to miss it!

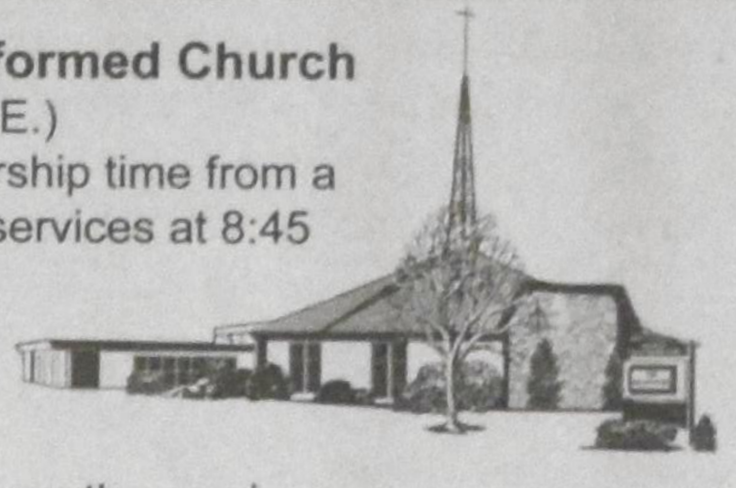
For details go to **www.trilliumleaguereunion.com**

Please send in your registration form a.s.a.p.

Questions? contact Phia at 519-699-5942 or phia@sympatico.ca

ANNOUNCEMENT:

The **Ancaster Christian Reformed Church**
(70 Garner Road E.)
will be changing their morning worship time from a single service to identical double services at 8:45 and 10:45 a.m. beginning
Sunday, September 14, 2008.
Nursery and Sunday School will be available for both services with a Fellowship time for all between the services.



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News

Mexico City launches community gardens

The 21 community gardens are part of the mayor's bid to improve the city's quality of life.

Mexico City – Teresa Trujillo's family income took a hit when her husband, a carpenter and the family's sole breadwinner, lost his job due to an illness just as food prices in Mexico started to skyrocket. So she looked for help with putting food on the table wherever she could find it.

It turns out the mother of two didn't have to look far: right around the corner, among concrete-block homes, some with sheets hanging as doors, neighbors grow squash, spinach, and cauliflower in neatly potted beds.

It's one of 21 community gardens planted in Mexico City since last year as part of Mayor Marcelo Ebrard's push to improve the quality of life for this sprawling city of 20 million. It's also part of the city's answer to food inflation that has led to clashes and riots the world over.

"Our goal is that Mexico City be self-sufficient when it comes to food," says Pedro Ponce, who directs the community garden program for the Mexico City government. "This is not to make anyone rich, but it can help."

"This helped me move forward when I needed it most, even though my kids didn't like vegetables," says Ms. Trujillo. "Now they do."

Skyrocketing food prices

Since Mexicans took to the streets last January after the price of tortillas doubled, the cost of corn, tomatoes, and onions has dominated conversations and editorial pages.

Over the past year, food prices in Mexico have gone up by 9.18 percent as of July, ... 5.30 percent rise in the ...

Participants in one of Mexico City's 21 new community gardens check out their crops. The program makes food more affordable.

President Felipe Calderóón announced measures to counter prices, including the elimination of tariffs on wheat, corn, and rice.

But the city community garden program, in which the government provides materials and expertise and the residents carry out the work, is intended to have an immediate impact.

The goal is to double the number of gardens by the end of 2008.

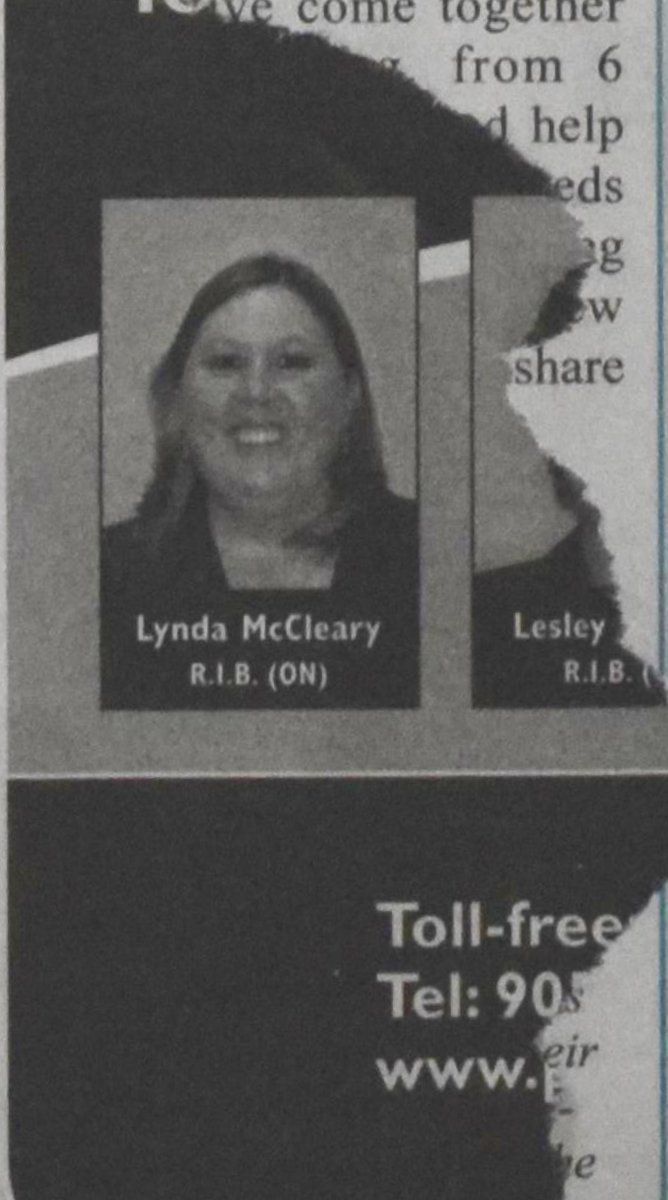
This garden, in the industrial and crime-ridden neighborhood of Iztapalapa on the edge of Mexico City, was among the city's first.

It used to be a garbage dump; now the smell of old milk cartons and beer cans has been replaced with the fresh scent of cilantro.

How the community gardens work

On a recent day, residents pull off pea pods, as a simple irrigation system waters crop beds. Small children, on summer holiday, run around the soccer field-sized space.

Here, about two dozen members of the garden ...tive come together ... from 6 ...d help ...eds ...g ...w share ...eir ...he ...s



the bounty they reap between their families.

The Mexican efforts follow a trend in the US. Backdoor gardens are blooming, with 25 million American households engaged in vegetable gardening last year, according to the National Garden Association (NGA). Bruce Butterfield, the research director of the NGA, says the group forecasts 10 percent growth in the number of households participating, as happened after the 2001 recession. The reason this time: high food and gas prices.

Mr. Butterfield says that part of the allure is a sense of control – a sentiment shared by Mexicans across the border, too. In a country where the minimum wage is $5 a day, and where nearly half the nation lives below the poverty line, growing their own food offers them a cushion of sorts. "This gives me security, if something happens, at least we can feed ourselves," says Marta Aguirre, a retired schoolteacher and cooperative member.

Rising food prices have dominated headlines and conversations in Mexico since the so-called "tortilla protests" of last year. In local markets, prices for vegetables are way up. Maria de los Angeles Lopez is now selling a kilogram of tomatoes for about $1 – double what she would have charged last year at this time, she says. But, in turn, the meals she eats at the local stall have also gone up. "I'm a mother; of course I'm worried about this," she says.

Some lifelong residents of Iztapalapa, such as Ms. Aguirre, had literally never stuck their fingers in the soil to plant a seed. For many others, it's a way to reexperience what they left behind in the countryside. "It had been a long time since I'd seen a plant in the ground, let alone do the actual planting," says Enrique Miguel Pazos, who moved to Mexico from the northern mountains of Oaxaca state 15 years ago and now makes a living selling tools at a local market.

The government wants this experience to spread throughout the city, and not just to neighborhoods but to schools and jails. The city is also promoting the planting of vegetables in backyards and on rooftop terraces.

The gardeners here in Iztapalapa eventually want to grow enough produce to sell at their own farmers' market. The aim, however, is not capital – it's philosophical, says Mariano Salazar, a group leader: "It's so that the residents of Mexico City learn how to be producers, and not just consumers."

Sara Miller Llana is a writer with The Christian Science Monitor.

Christian Fellowship Autumn Glory Motorcoach Tour

October 7-8, 2008

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